

## The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 1899–1904

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# The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 1899–1904

*Documents of the 'Economist' Opposition to Iskra  
and Early Menshevism*

*By*

Richard Mullin



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*This book is dedicated to  
Tatiana Karpova*





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## Preface

The present volume contains translations of documents connected to the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) that were written between the years 1899 and 1904, a period of the Party's history characterised by two important internal political conflicts. The first of these involved the followers of Plekhanov's 'Emancipation of Labour' group and the pro-RSDLP newspaper, *Iskra*, who came into conflict with the allegedly 'Economist' journal, *Rabochee Delo*, over the character of the Party's basic ideology and political strategy, and it mainly concerned a number of small groupings in the Social-Democratic emigration. The second took place within the *Iskra* camp following its triumph over various opponents at the Second Congress of the RSDLP and eventually split the entire Party, including its organisations operating illegally on Russian soil. This conflict is often regarded as the starting point of two separate trends in Russian Social Democracy, 'Bolshevism' and 'Menshevism'.

As a contribution to the intellectual history of Russian Marxism, the present work is mainly directed towards an audience of political theorists, most of whom will encounter difficulties in the diverse linguistic requirements necessary for a thoroughgoing study of the history of Marxist thought. The international character of Marxism and the various languages in which its leading thinkers wrote make translation necessary for all but the most gifted of linguists in order for its scope to be properly appreciated: the number of scholars capable of reading the works of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Mao and Che Guevara in the language in which they were originally written must be very small indeed. The existence of international organisations, including the four 'international' in the history of Marxism, not to mention parallel labour organisations and various transnational factions within these groups, amounts to a source of additional challenges for historians. Such arrangements seem to have ensured that any political development in one country always had the potential to spill over into another, with the effect that a political debate starting in one language could be continued or completed in a second or a third.

This profoundly international character of politically organised Marxism, evident from the earliest period of the doctrine's existence right up to the present day, has always served to ensure that a sufficiently vast supply of Marxist texts and documents have become available in as many languages as possible. However, it would be naive to imagine that this propagation of Marxist literature was not done with various political purposes in mind or that these purposes have always served the cause of historical scholarship well. Whether this propagation occurred in the hope of promoting world-socialist revolution, the

prestige of a given 'socialist' state or that of an individual, certain quite serious problems can be found in it from the point of view of a historian of ideas.

Specifically it would appear that, because Marxism developed as a school of thought by means of adversarial debate, many of the texts translated, re-translated and endlessly republished represent the defence of a definite political position against a definite opponent, named or otherwise. Thus scholars of all countries are often placed in the curious situation of acquiring a certain critical, second-hand familiarity with a whole series of shadowy historical figures, trends and documents – Max Stirner, 'True Socialism', Eugen Dühring, *Raboochee Delo*, Eduard Bernstein, 'Left Communism', Max Shachtman and James Burnham. The views and political physiognomy of each of these have been subject to detailed evaluation by one of several notable Marxist theoreticians whose views have been very widely broadcast. Yet the opportunity of studying the views of these individuals independent of their critics – in other words, the opportunity to read these criticised statements – often remains a problem even today. Unlike the luminaries mentioned above, their work has not been translated into the vast majority of languages – with the exception of passages cited by their opponents – and they have notably lacked an effective international network, well served by translators, institutes, publishing houses and so forth. Moreover, in comparison with their critics, their arguments probably lack brilliance and in some cases represent a position that was soon abandoned or reflect an episode that the author would later want to forget about. Unlike the Marxists, or the more successful trend within Marxism, they were not always eager to record their contribution to these debates for posterity.

One of the aims of the present volume is to retrieve just a few of the documents of these almost forgotten trends from what Trotsky habitually referred to as 'the dustbin of history'. This work was not necessarily carried out in the expectation of uncovering lost theoretical gems and it is clear that not all of the documents included in this volume are well-written or coherently argued. Rather, the aim of the book is to allow readers of some of the better-known and widely-read Russian Social-Democratic literary products of the period, especially the works of Lenin, to gain greater insight into what they are reading.

Regarding this insight, it is notable that the question remains in many scholars' minds as to whether the political differences between the various sides during the period in question had any substance and the view that they were simply the product of 'polemical exaggeration', some distortion of personality, an unprincipled power struggle or some other incidental factor is fairly widespread today. Indeed, it seems that there are few historians of any political persuasion writing in the English language who would acknowledge these differences as real and significant. The present volume may well challenge

this predominant view. Its presentation of the main theoretical statements of 'Economism' and early Menshevism may help clarify the degree to which real ideological causes existed behind the schisms of the period and may offer some progress in the debate as to whether phenomena such as 'Economism' ever really existed in Russian Social Democracy, and if so in what form, and the debate over whether disagreements regarding the definition of a Party member could really serve as sufficient cause for a split in the *Iskra* supporters at the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

The fact that the differences alluded to contain both an ideological and an organisational element require the supply, in the course of this volume, of more than a little editorial commentary in order that the context and consequences of each of the documents be appreciated by the reader. Additionally, many readers will probably find an account of the broader context and history of Russian Marxism helpful, even if this were only to summarise the main findings of an area that has been covered many times by scholars writing in the English language. Reflecting this, the study will begin with a discussion of how this theory emerged, its relation to and difference from Western Marxism, and the way in which it fractured into competing trends during the period immediately prior to the one which forms the focus of this collection. Apart from this, a significant amount of detail concerning the political and organisational development of the RSDLP from its inception in 1898 will probably be of help to many readers. This too has been provided as a separate commentary to each of the documents.

As for the documents themselves, the overwhelming majority of them represent direct or indirect attacks on the positions adopted by Lenin during the early phase of the RSDLP's development, even where this is not stated explicitly. Such a selection of material is of course not in the least an expression of the translator's preferences so much as a recognition that just about everything Lenin had to say on this subject has already appeared in English in numerous editions and that a more complete picture of the period requires a similar degree of exposure to some of the views he opposed.

Accordingly, some of the main theoretical statements of the journal, *Rabochee Delo*, along with its supplement, *Listok Rabocheho Dela*, form the focus of the first part of the collection. These include the two articles in *Rabochee Delo* No. 10, written by Boris Krichevskii and Alexander Martynov, which receive so much hostile attention in Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*, as well as the article in *Listok Rabocheho Dela* No. 6, 'A Historic Turn'. This was the polemical target in Lenin's article, 'Where to Begin?', which is often regarded as a preliminary sketch for this same pamphlet. Apart from that, the selection contains the original programme of *Rabochee Delo*, published in the first issue

of the journal, and Plekhanov's unusual brochure directed against the journal, *Vademecum*, for the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*. This is included because, alongside the author's lengthy and somewhat withering preface, it contains numerous, quite complete, statements of the so-called 'Economist' world-view taken from private letters and unpublished drafts written by Plekhanov's colleagues in the Social-Democratic emigration.

The latter part of the collection centres on early Menshevik critiques of Lenin. The origin of Menshevism in the period prior to the Second Congress of the RSDLP seems to be clearly illustrated in the letter of a key *Iskra* underground operative, Ekaterina Alexandrova, who argues that an excessively hostile approach to *Iskra*'s factional opponents is damaging the Party, and certain passages in the correspondence of the future Menshevik leader Iulii Martov. Context for these documents is provided with the help of polemical articles by the Jewish Bund, which are directed against *Iskra* and what appears to be a set of statutes governing the conduct of *Iskra*'s supporting organisation in Russia, an organisation with which Alexandrova appears disaffected.

Also included is what appears to be a founding manifesto of the Menshevik faction written by Martov and Trotsky in September 1903, a lengthy and polemical account of the dispute between the followers of Lenin and Martov in the period following the second RSDLP Congress – Martov's *State of Siege in the RSDLP* – and several articles by Plekhanov following his break with Lenin towards the end of 1903, and the beginning of his alliance with the Mensheviks in all practical matters. By way of exception, a pro-Lenin account of the Second Congress of the RSDLP is provided, as no comparably detailed pro-Martov account appears to exist. Pavlovich's *Letter to Comrades on the Second Congress of the RSDLP* seems to provide valuable context to the early-Menshevik arguments, describing events which are not mentioned in the official minutes of the Congress or in Lenin's own detailed accounts of the meeting. The fact that it has not been previously translated into English served as an additional consideration motivating its inclusion in the collection.

All but one of these documents are taken from three sources: the Houghton Collection of Russian Revolutionary Literature, the *Leninskii Sbornik* and the collected works of Plekhanov. The first of these is a vast collection originally compiled at Harvard but which is also held in microfilm copy at the British Library. It contains images of nearly every page of all the main RSDLP periodicals and pamphlets from the period studied, along with similar material from all the other Russian revolutionary trends, with an overall scope ranging from the mid-nineteenth century up the post-revolutionary Civil-War period. The *Leninskii Sbornik* was published in around fifty instalments over a period of six

decades and contains a variety of material taken from various Party archives, including correspondence and drafts connected to Lenin but not exclusively written by him. As for the works of Plekhanov, a five-volume edition in English does exist, but it does not contain the translated items presented here. These are taken from a 24 volume edition published in the 1920s, which went through several re-prints during the lifespan of the Soviet Union, but which was never translated into English.

According to the possibly limited knowledge of the present writer, none of the documents presented in this collection appears to have been translated into English previously.<sup>1</sup> Given the priority on the part of the translator of including in the collection only documents that most readers would otherwise have serious difficulties obtaining, one issue that may be encountered in this volume may be the absence of certain documents from it which are of importance when it comes to understanding the various arguments advanced both in the documents themselves and sometimes in the commentary, but which have previously been translated into English and are therefore not included in the collection.

In order to deal with this problem, the reader will probably benefit from access to – and indeed close study of – a small number of other volumes, some of which are now available on the internet.<sup>2</sup> These include Lenin's *Collected Works*,<sup>3</sup> especially volumes two, three, four, five, six and seven; and Plekhanov's *Selected Philosophical Works*.<sup>4</sup> The following titles will also be of use: Harding and Taylor, *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879–1906*;<sup>5</sup> Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, translated by Tudor;<sup>6</sup> Shanin, *Late Marx and the*

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1 This said, a revised edition of the *Programme of Rabochee Delo*, the first document of this collection, appeared in Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 268–76. This version, which was first published in February 1902, does contain certain changes but closely resembles the original, a translation of which is included in the present volume and which dates from April 1899. Earlier translations of the *Credo* and Lenin's *Protest* against it, both of which also appear in the present collection as part of Plekhanov's *Vademecum for the Editorial Board of Rabochee Delo*, are to be found in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 167–82, whilst one of the documents appended by Martov to his *State of Siege*, Lenin's leaflet, *Why I Resigned from the Editorial Board of Iskra*, can be found at Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 118–24. These translations differ in small ways from those appearing in the present volume.

2 [www.marx.org](http://www.marx.org); [www.marx2mao.org](http://www.marx2mao.org).

3 Lenin 1960–79.

4 Plekhanov 1961.

5 Harding and Taylor 1983.

6 Bernstein 1961.

*Russian Road*<sup>7</sup> and Pearce, 1903: *Second Ordinary Congress of the RSDLP: Complete Text of the Minutes*.<sup>8</sup> Of course, some of the documents and publications cited in the text are not available in English nor are they accessible via the internet, but in most cases it has been possible to offer a brief summary of the contents, owing to the extensive character of the Houghton Collection.

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7 Shanin (ed.) 1983.

8 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978.

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*Richard Mullin*  
July 2013

## Notes on Names and Dates

Generally speaking, events taking place and documents written inside the Russian Empire are dated using a modified Julian Calendar rather than the Gregorian, as this was the official calendar of the Russian Empire at the time. Documents written and events taking place outside the Russian Empire are referred to using the Gregorian Calendar. One notable exception to this rule is the *Iskra* newspaper which, trying to give the impression that it was not an émigré publication, is dated using the Julian Calendar.

Dates using this calendar are eleven days behind the comparable date in the Gregorian Calendar up until 28 February 1900, and twelve days behind it from this point onwards, the Julian calendar counting 1900 as a leap year. To distinguish between calendars, the abbreviations O.S. ('Old Style', for the modified Julian) and N.S. ('New Style', for the Gregorian) are used. Thus May Day takes place on 19 April O.S. or 1 May N.S. up until 1899 and on 18 April O.S. from 1900 onwards.

Some towns and cities of the former Russian Empire have changed their names over time and, apart from that, several variations on their names exist reflecting rival linguistic and cultural influences. Generally speaking, this book uses the official English names of towns and cities used at the beginning of the twentieth century and on this basis it tends towards a Russianised version of these names. Hence we have Vilno, Kharkov, Kovno and Belostock, though today these cities are as likely to be represented as Vilnius, Kharkiv, Kaunas and Białystok, reflecting the influence of the Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Polish languages. It should go without saying that no political point is intended when making this choice.

Ekaterinoslav, an important city in the early history of the RSDLP is modern-day Dnipropetrovsk/Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine's fourth largest city.

Russian words and names are represented in the Roman alphabet using a slightly simplified version of the American Library Association-Library of Congress system, which is used throughout North American libraries and in the British Library.



# Introduction

The present collection contains documents connected to the earliest period of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party's history. They date from shortly after its foundation in March 1898, through its Second Congress in July–August 1903 and up to, but not including, the 1905 mass uprising against the Russian autocracy. This period of the Party's history began with the meeting of representatives of four local Russian Social-Democratic organisations, so-called 'Unions of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class' in Minsk, along with representatives of a Jewish Social-Democratic party, the 'General Jewish-Labour Union of Poland and Russia'. These organisations agreed to found a Social-Democratic party covering the whole area of the Russian Empire, and which was to be as multi-ethnic and multi-lingual as this empire itself.

Convened by the Kiev-based Social-Democratic newspaper, *Rabochaia Gazeta*, this First Congress of the RSDLP approved a founding manifesto and a Party constitution,<sup>1</sup> elected a Central Committee and appointed *Rabochaia Gazeta* as the Party's press organ, whilst also holding unrecorded discussions on various practical matters. The nine people who attended this small meeting were then for the most part arrested, the Party thus being reduced to a quite ambiguous position. The subsequent absence of any life at the summit of the RSDLP, in the sense of a re-established Central Committee, official newspaper or Congress, has caused some to conclude that the organisation simply did not exist from this point onwards and that it was only properly established at its Second Congress which, despite the fairly telling clue in its name, is therefore viewed as its 'real' founding Congress.<sup>2</sup> However, closer examination of certain Social-Democratic documents from this period, several of which are included in the present collection, indicates that this was in fact anything but the case.

Despite the absence of a regular leadership for the Party, numerous organisations, including those present at the First Congress, continued to maintain that the Party was a reality. Between 1898 and 1903, the Jewish Bund, probably the most solid of these organisations, re-stated its adherence to the RSDLP at its own sovereign Congresses on more than one occasion,<sup>3</sup> whilst

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1 See Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 222–6.

2 See, for example, Krupskaya 1930, pp. 22–3; Read 1995, p. 60; Tobias 1961, p. 346. There is also one very interesting late-Soviet discussion of how and why the second RSDLP Congress was presented as the 'founding Congress of Bolshevism' in popular Soviet literature – Fedorin 1988.

3 See Chapter 13 of the present collection and *Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Sovetskogo Soiuzu* 1970, pp. 41, 43.

publications such as *Iskra*, *Rabochee Delo* and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* proclaimed their affiliation to the Party on the cover of every issue. Apart from these 'Party' newspapers and journals – and only those with a national or regional circulation are mentioned here – there is the question of the local 'Unions of Struggle', which continued for the most part to function as local branches of the RSDLP in areas where the Bund was not present. The foundation of such organisations was an ongoing process during the period covered by the present collection. Reports of the foundation of new local groups were a regular feature of the column in *Iskra* tellingly entitled, 'From the Party' (*Iz partii*). The leaflets and other publicity of these groups were also reproduced in the columns of *Iskra*.

Further evidence of RSDLP activity prior to its Second Congress is to be found in the work of the 'Organising Committee', a body initially set up in March 1902, which brought together representatives of all the main pro-RSDLP factions in common work directed towards the organisation of this same Congress. The body took on numerous functions which might normally be associated with a Party Central Committee, it made contact with all the main local Social-Democratic organisations, supplied them with literature, printed their leaflets and secured funds from them. It also issued 'proclamations' of its own, concerning affairs of national importance and in connection with the May Day celebrations.<sup>4</sup> One final pro-RSDLP organisation which cannot be overlooked is the *Iskra* apparatus in Russia, an organisation based around 'professional' activists responsible for distributing the newspaper throughout the country and of obtaining political connections and influence for it among the local organisations.<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the question of the actual size and activity of these various organisations, one source states that the Bund could claim 14 'committees' during this period, as well as its own Central Committee, Foreign Committee, regular Congress and rudimentary press organs.<sup>6</sup> A 'committee' was the leadership of a sufficiently well-organised and active local group, with the effect that numerous local organisations who had not yet graduated to 'committee' status were also in existence. Below each committee, numerous local Party organs existed

4 *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 1966, Vol. 59, pp. 8–39.

5 For a description of the activities of this organisation, see Chapter 11 of the present collection along with commentary, and Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 229–50 ('A Letter to a Comrade on Organisational Tasks'), which describes how the *Iskra* network in Russia planned to reorganise the local RSDLP organisation in St. Petersburg, having won control over it. According to Zinoviev, the organisation contained between one hundred and one hundred and fifty members (Zinoviev 1973, p. 76).

6 See Akimov 1969c, p. 222.

with evidently overlapping membership, and one key institution was the reading circle. Reading circles as a rule seem to have been led by an educated non-worker, who taught classes of general education combined with Marxist theory with the aim of creating a cadre of educated workers capable of acting as political leaders in the workers' struggles of the future. It seems that not all participants in the circles were necessarily Party members, but those that were, were involved in other specialist subgroups dedicated to such matters as procuring and distributing illegal literature, recruitment, fundraising, printing and so forth. The overall picture obtained is thus one of a local 'apparatus' of up to a few dozen committed members serving a slightly broader public of reading-circle attendees and a much broader occasional audience, to whom 'proclamations' and spoken agitation could be directed during strikes, protests and the like. Apart from this, there is the question of trade unions affiliating to the Bund: two such organisations appear to have taken this step by the organisation's 1901 Congress.<sup>7</sup>

As for the rest of the RSDLP, the situation seems to have been fairly similar. In Kiev, an organisation of some thirty 'intellectuals' organised reading circles in the period prior to the First Congress and twenty such circles were active in St. Petersburg prior to the raids of late 1895.<sup>8</sup> An additional structure which appears evident among the 'Unions of Struggle' were the 'workers' organisations', usually groups of fewer than half a dozen workers. Their job was to establish as many contacts as possible in the various workplaces of a given locality, thus building up a network for the distribution of agitational material and illegal literature, along with a much broader audience for Social-Democratic ideas.<sup>9</sup> The statement by two sources that up to five hundred individuals were seized by the police in the immediate aftermath of the First Congress therefore need not be viewed as either exaggeration or a case of overreaction by the authorities.<sup>10</sup> The Social Democrats were small, but they were nonetheless active and sporadically organised. At the Second Congress, 19 local 'committees' were granted representation according to a stipulation which stated that the local organisation's existence and public activity among workers must have lasted at least a year. Fifteen local groups were denied representation at the Congress owing to insufficient solidity.<sup>11</sup>

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7 See Chapter 13 of the present collection.

8 Eidelman 1921.

9 Eidelman 1921.

10 Eidelman 1921 and Akimov 1969c, p. 302.

11 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 32–5 and pp. 501–2.

Given the evidence that organisations claiming to belong to the RSDLP existed during the period 1899–1903, the question will perhaps be posed of the main events in the history of the Party during this period. The commentary accompanying each of the documents included in the present collection will hopefully satisfy the reader on this point. However, material which helps the reader assess the significance of the period as a whole will also probably be of use in the form of a general introduction, and should help the reader form a judgement regarding the degree to which the ideological and organisational differences debated in the documents were of any substance. Some have argued, for example, that there was little difference between the so-called ‘Economism’ of *Rabochee Delo* and the alternative articulated by their main opponent, the *Iskra* newspaper and their editors Lenin, Plekhanov and Martov.<sup>12</sup> Others have insisted that the difference is real and that it fundamentally affects the aims and manner in which a workers’ party is organised.<sup>13</sup>

In relation to such debates, it is important to recognise that, by the time the period studied in this volume was reached, Russian revolutionary thought had been maturing for a good number of decades and issues connected to the relative significance of workers’ conscious political thought and their immediate economic needs had been raised many times previously in the movement, often leading to serious divisions in terms of tactics and, subsequently, principles. Indeed, awareness of this pre-history would appear to be absolutely essential if fair and proper conclusions regarding the period in question are to be drawn. Bearing this in mind, the next part of our introductory essay will trace the development of this thought, showing how Russian Social Democracy emerged from an earlier ‘Populist’ revolutionary movement and how it developed through a series of turns towards, and then away from, ‘economic’ agitation.

In a similar vein, controversial questions relating to democracy, autocratic leadership, centralism and other aspects of Party organisation arise when considering many of the documents, especially but not exclusively those included in the latter part of the collection. These are the ones connected to the split among the supporters of the *Iskra* newspaper at the Second RSDLP Congress, which seemingly took place over matters relating to the internal regime of the Party. In the wake of this split, numerous allegations were made against Lenin: that he wished to establish a personal dictatorship over the Party, that he sought a marked reduction in Party membership and a situation in which criticism

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12 See, for example, Frankel 1963; Lih 2006, pp. 279–334; Keep 1966, p. 84.

13 Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1939, pp. 80–9; Harding 1977, pp. 135–60; Woods 1999, pp. 91–113.

would not be tolerated.<sup>14</sup> In order to evaluate these arguments, the reader will need to link the above-mentioned quite general considerations to technical questions regarding the RSDLP's constitution – its controversial first paragraph in particular – and to the overall structure of the Party those rules dictate.<sup>15</sup> A general discussion of the previous organisational history of the Russian Social Democrats, along with a discussion of the type of organisational arrangements it evolved, and the reasoning behind them, would again appear to serve a useful purpose in advance of the reader considering the documents themselves. In this way the debates will be placed in their proper context and the implications lurking behind certain technical points of controversy should become more clear. Up until now, it seems that there has been insufficient appreciation of this organisational context, the result being highly partisan, ideologically driven interpretations of the origins of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split, and hopefully this preliminary discussion will encourage a more sober and detailed examination of the episode.

### **Economics and Politics in Russian Revolutionary Strategy: 1876–99**

In discussing the rise of Russian Social Democracy and Russian Marxism, it is hard to avoid, or indeed fail to give pride of place to, the figure of Georgii Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856–1918), the reputed ‘father of Russian Marxism’, despite certain attempts in recent scholarship to downplay the influence of this individual on later generations of Russian Social Democrats and on Lenin in particular.<sup>16</sup> Plekhanov is important not only because he began a systematic study of Marx and Engels's views much earlier than most, even travelling abroad with the specific aim of improving his knowledge, but also because he dedicated a significant part of his life, albeit without many brilliant successes, to

14 See, for example, Trotsky s.d. [1903], pp. 22–8; Wolfe 1948, pp. 163–5; Keep 1966, pp. 90–4; Dan 1964, pp. 238–9; Ulam 1966, p. 181; Schapiro 1970, p. 54. See also Chapters 17, 18 and 21 of the present work.

15 A translation of the final version of these rules, approved by the second RSDLP Congress, can be found in: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 10–12, or Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 293–5. A translation of Lenin's original draft, which was somewhat modified by this Congress, appears in the first of these volumes: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 511–12.

16 See Donald 1993, Lih 2006. Somewhat in contrast to these works, the present historical sketch owes some debt the work of Baron 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1957; Belfour 1978; Eaton 1980; Frankel (ed.) 1969; Grigorieva 2004; Savel'ev 2006; Tobias 1961 and 1973; Wada 1981, Walicki 1977, Zhuikov 1975.

supporting Social-Democratic organisations in Russia by providing them with literature expounding his conception of Marxism. These factors set him apart from the small number of Russian intellectuals who either found a sympathiser in Marx – Chernyshevskii, Lavrov and Flerovskii<sup>17</sup> being notable examples – or who translated Marx's *Capital* and defended it in the Russian press, as was the

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- 17 Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii (1828–89) was a well-known Russian journalist who wrote for the legally-permitted cultural review, *Sovremennik*, during the 1850s and early 1860s. He was an agrarian socialist and revolutionary democrat, a materialist thinker who was also one of the key influences on 'nihilism', a rationalistic, utilitarian youth movement which aggressively challenged social conventions. A critic of the limitations of the autocracy's reforms of 1861 which put an end to serfdom, he counted on a peasant uprising as a means to enforce a more just and complete 'liberation' of the peasantry, involving a general transfer of land to the peasants from the gentry, church and crown without compensation. Having been charged with authoring a revolutionary proclamation, he was deported to Siberia where he spent most of the rest of his life. Whilst awaiting trial in the Peter-Paul fortress in St. Petersburg, he wrote the novel *What Is To Be Done?* (1862), which described the lifestyle of young revolutionaries and which criticised bourgeois marriage. Both Marx and Engels praised his thinking and his efforts to promote socialist and democratic ideas in Russia, even though Chernyshevskii did not see the proletariat as the central force in the struggle for socialism and saw little progressive in the capitalist system.

Petr Lavrovich Lavrov (1823–1900) was another important pioneer of socialist ideas in Russia and a member of the 'Land and Freedom' circle that was close to Chernyshevskii during the early sixties. Arrested in 1868 and exiled, he fled abroad and became involved in the International Working Men's Association, allying with the Marxist faction and organising support for the Paris Commune. Along with Marx and Engels, he later supported the 'People's Will' organisation, but unlike Plekhanov, and despite his involvement in the International, he did not associate the fight for socialism in Russia with the development of an independent workers' party. Instead, he believed that the intelligentsia would act as the bearer of socialist ideas in Russia. Apart from his political activities, he achieved some reputation as a philosopher, sociologist and historian of ideas and he played a role in the Second International up until his death, which was marked with a lengthy obituary in *Rabochee Delo* No. 6.

Vasilii Vasil'evich Bervi (1829–1918), better-known by his pseudonym Flerovskii, was a Populist scholar and pamphleteer whose works were suppressed by the Russian authorities. His most famous work is *The Conditions of the Working Class in Russia* (Bervi 1869) which was praised by Marx for its unsentimental account of the Russian countryside, the implication of which was that the peasantry was not 'naturally socialist', as some of the early-Russian socialists such as Herzen had believed. Despite this sceptical attitude, Bervi appears to have had an influence on the movement of students 'to the people' in the early 1870s, owing to his belief that the peasantry could be won to socialist ideas through propaganda. However, he never adopted Social-Democratic views, rejecting the arguments of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.

case with the Populists Danielson and Lopatin<sup>18</sup> and the academic economist, Ziber.<sup>19</sup> Among these figures we find a variety of philosophical and economic views, but none appear to have subscribed to the Marxist theory of history, which stated that capitalism establishes the economic groundwork for a future socialist society as was the case with Plekhanov. Likewise, it seems that only Plekhanov took the explicit position that Russia, despite various remnants of serfdom, was essentially a capitalist society and that consequently any social revolution would have to be led by the urban working class. Finally, whilst some such as Lavrov played a fairly consistent role in promoting the creation of a socialist party in Russia connected to the International Working Men's Association and later to the Second International, only Plekhanov argued that such a party had to be based predominantly in the urban working class, owing to the latter's privileged position as an agent of revolutionary change.

Plekhanov did not begin his revolutionary career as a Social Democrat, but as a member of the Populist party, 'Land and Freedom', an organisation

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18 Nikolai Frantsevich Danielson (1844–1918) was involved in revolutionary circles during the late 1860s and published a Russian translation of the three volumes of Marx's *Capital* in 1872, 1885 and 1896. This was the first translation of *Capital* into any language from the original German. Politically, Danielson claimed that Russia could bypass a capitalist phase of development owing to collectivist features of Russian village life, the traditional position of Russian Populism, and he sought support for this position in some of Marx's correspondence from the late 1870s, in which the latter appeared to argue that Russian socialism could be based on these village institutions rather than the proletariat. Danielson was opposed by the Social-Democratic supporters of Plekhanov in subsequent years for sticking to this position, which the latter viewed as outdated.

Herman Alexandrovich Lopatin (1845–1918) was a daring revolutionary activist and friend of Danielson, who worked for a time on the translation of the first volume of *Capital*, but later abandoned the project. Acquainted with Marx and Engels, he briefly served on the General Council of the First International in 1870, and was later involved with 'Land and Freedom' and 'People's Will'. His determination to work underground in Russia and to build the forces of the latter organisation resulted in his arrest in 1884, trial in 1887 and imprisonment until 1905, though he had originally been handed down a death sentence for his role in the assassination of a police colonel, Georgii Porfirievich Sudeikin (1850–83). Lopatin was subsequently a supporter of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, though largely inactive owing to health problems developed during his time in prison.

19 Nikolai Ivanovich Ziber (1844–88) published numerous academic articles defending Marx's economic analysis of capitalism during the mid-1870s. He was at this stage a professor at Kiev University. He was critical of Populist economic thinking regarding the village commune, including the thought of Danielson. He does not appear to have been active in any political organisation and eventually left Russia, continuing his scholarly pursuits in Switzerland.



founded in 1876 that survived for three years before splitting into what might reasonably be termed 'political' and 'economic' factions. At this stage it is safe to assume that he supported a series of positions strongly influenced by Herzen and Bakunin,<sup>20</sup> in the sense that he saw a traditional and instinctive socialism in the Russian peasantry owing to certain features of village life. First among these features was collective land tenure, land being owned by the village commune and periodically 'redistributed' between households in accordance with the number of individuals living in each. This traditional practice was reinforced by a series of collective obligations rendered to the state by each commune, namely the payment of taxes and the supply of recruits to the army. For the supporters of 'Land and Freedom', such collectivist behaviour reflected the 'people's ideals' and, as such, the organisation appeared inclined towards the view that Russia of all countries was somehow exceptional, that it would not follow the path of development witnessed in Western Europe, and

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20 Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (1812–70) was a famous Russian émigré man of letters and the founder of Populist socialism in Russia. He witnessed the 1848 revolutions at first-hand but became disillusioned with European society because of their failure in socialist terms. He later concluded that Russia would be the birthplace of a future world-socialist order owing to the communal features of peasant life. Herzen was criticised by Marx and Engels both for these Slavophile tendencies and for an over-optimistic attitude towards the socialist capabilities of the Russian peasantry.

In the late 1850s, Herzen published the influential revolutionary newspaper, *Kolokol*, from London. This gained wide circulation even among the ruling circles in Russia and it advocated liberal and democratic ideas. Herzen criticised the terms under which serfdom was ended as too sympathetic to the interests of the gentry and by supporting the rebels during the Polish uprising of 1863, he lost the support of liberal reformers in the Russian Empire, placing himself firmly in the camp of revolutionary democracy. He associated briefly with the First International, but given his Slavophile world-view, these connections were fairly superficial.

Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814–76) was a revolutionary activist much influenced by thought of Herzen. Today he is regarded as a key figure in the history of anarchism, partially owing to his disagreements with Marx and Engels in the First International. Towards the end of his life, he placed his revolutionary hopes in the most disaffected elements in rural and urban society, including bandits, religious sectarians, deserters from the army and those who had fled conscription and tax demands. He believed that these 'rebels' against mainstream society would play a leading role in an uprising against the state rather better than the intelligentsia, the proletariat or the farming peasantry. More clearly than Herzen, Bakunin emphasised that a post-revolutionary society would lack a state, being made up of a federation of village communes and co-operatives, each of which was free to define its relationship with the other.



that the capitalism of Western Europe would meet with resistance by the peasant majority should it be introduced into Russia.

According to 'Land and Freedom', the key political ambition of this peasantry was a general end to private property in land, a situation which would secure the abolition of the gentry as a class and the independence of the commune from the compulsory intervention by the state, in the form of policing, taxation, army recruitment and so forth. The result would be a federal association of peasant communes, each of which was free to define its relations with the others and to some minimal form of government. This state of affairs was to be achieved, in their view, by means of a violent uprising which would drive the forces of the state – the police and the officials – from the land. Regular peasant insurrections against individual landlords seemed to provide evidence that the peasantry had rebellious tendencies, as did the presence of dissenting religious sects, banditry and other rebellious subcultures within the peasantry. As an organisation, 'Land and Freedom' appears to have aimed at directing its forces towards these phenomena and linking them together in a nationwide uprising against the state.<sup>21</sup>

Tactically, 'Land and Freedom', insisted that an immediate revolution was necessary in order to save the commune from the encroachment of private ownership and capitalism. At the same time, the organisation appears to have acknowledged that the mass of the peasantry was perhaps not the section of society most responsive to revolutionary agitation. Indeed, it assumed that the most 'prepared' revolutionaries came from intelligentsia and urban-worker backgrounds, whilst also recognising the value to the revolution of the above-mentioned rebellious subcultures. Accordingly, it engaged in agitation among university students, the tactical courting of liberals 'with the goal of exploiting them for our own use' and the recruitment of army officers and other figures in the state apparatus who could help 'disorganise' it in the event of an uprising. All these features point to the fact that 'Land and Freedom', in contrast to the later Social Democrats' view of the proletariat, did not treat the peasantry as an especially revolutionary social class. Discontent was assumed to be fairly ubiquitous in society, and there was little notion of the peasantry playing a privileged or leading role in the revolution and a less than consistent notion of class struggle.

Indeed, despite the emphasis on the land question, the revolution was assumed to be in the interests of all sections of society equally, though the reasoning behind this assumption was never really made clear. It is hard to understand how the privileged classes, sections of which would surely lose out

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21 See *Zemlia i volia* 1878.

during an agrarian reform, would support a revolution in which such a reform would be a central feature. Moreover, whilst it is possible that these sections would gain some sort of 'freedom' from such a revolution, the nature of this freedom remains very ambiguous in the programmatic documents of 'Land and Freedom'. One curious feature of them appears to be the absence of any reference to constitutional government, civil rights and similar 'democratic' features which might have appealed to the non-peasant sections of Russian society, a feature which later caused Plekhanov to characterise it as 'anti-political'. This was in the sense that it was, much after the fashion of anarchism, opposed to state power, conceiving freedom in terms of the absence of this state rather than its legitimate re-foundation on the basis of the will of the people.<sup>22</sup> Of course, this presentation of the concept of 'freedom' seems to do little to reassure the owning classes, who would surely be deprived of the least right to redress with this type of 'anarchy' in place, which leads back to the question of why 'Land and Freedom' thought it sensible to appeal to these sections of society.

This contradiction implicit in the views of 'Land and Freedom', the view that a revolution which really only served the interests of the peasantry would be supported by other sections of society, who would help carry it out, appears to have been based on the negative experience of previous agitations in the countryside on the part of intelligentsia revolutionaries, most of which had not received a sympathetic response from the peasantry. The reasons for the peasants' indifference were probably rooted in economic relations that were not well understood by Russian socialists at the time. Generally speaking, the abolition of serfdom<sup>23</sup> in 1861 was regarded by the latter as a travesty in so

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22 Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1 pp. 49–66 ('Socialism and Political Struggle').

23 Serfdom in Russia is associated rather more with the rise of tsarism in the early-modern period than with the Middle Ages, as in Western Europe. However, as in Western Europe, it involved serious restrictions on the right of peasants to leave the estate on which they were born. These restrictions were increased during the tsarist period, so that by the end of the eighteenth century, serfs could not even marry the serf of a different master without permission, but they could be bought or sold to a different landlord. Serfdom never existed in Siberia, the Urals, or in the far north of European Russia, and peasants living on state-owned lands were not considered to be serfs, even though their freedom of movement was restricted and they usually performed compulsory labour. These 'state peasants' made up slightly under half of the peasantry as a whole. Not all serfs worked the land or lived in the countryside: many were also domestic servants or industrial workers. Some serfs worked in mines. Serfdom was abolished in the Baltic region during 1816–19 and serfdom was formally abolished in 1861 throughout the Russian Empire, a move which gave formal independence to

far as some of the features of bondage, such as labour service and quit-rent,<sup>24</sup> were retained on a temporary basis, for up to nine years, as the price of the 'liberated' peasant's use of the land. After this period, the village communes acquired the right and eventually the obligation to buy the land, the greater proportion of which had been bought by the state from the gentry during the process of 'liberation'. The land was to be paid for using 49-year mortgages, 'redemption payments', the total cost of which was much higher than the market value of the land being bought. Worse, the sections of the land given over to the peasantry were smaller than the ones they had traditionally farmed and were often detached from essential features of the estate such as ponds, forests and meadows, access to which was granted by the landlords for a fee. Therefore, and not without justification, Russian socialists believed these arrangements would make the peasantry ripe for revolt against the terms of the 'emancipation'.

Indeed, the miserly character of the reform had provoked a sizeable wave of peasant protest when it was announced, and this phenomenon appears to have given significant credibility to agrarian socialist doctrines. However, this protest movement lost momentum during the early sixties as 'temporarily bound' peasants – those still carrying out feudal obligations – went over to the mortgage system. Thereafter, it seems that it became difficult for the revolutionaries to convince peasants of the purpose of a new general uprising against the terms of the emancipation. One reason for this was that different villages now operated under entirely different social relations and another was that those who had gone over to mortgage payments were experiencing growing inequality between rich and poor households.<sup>25</sup> Such polarisation of wealth was significant not simply because it undermined the moral solidarity of the village, but because the slogan of 'land redistribution' could really only serve to benefit the richer, better-stocked farms. The lack of farming necessities such as livestock, tools, buildings, grain and money among the poorer peasants had led many to cease farming altogether in favour of manual trades and migration to the urban areas, and this section of the population

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around twenty-three million individuals out of a total peasant population of about fifty million.

24 Money paid by a peasant in place of compulsory labour or other feudal dues.

25 Perhaps the best known example of the failure of socialist propaganda among the peasantry was the movement 'towards the people' of 1874–5, in which thousands of socialists were arrested and hundreds brought to trial, having failed to make a significant impression on the peasantry with their ideas.

would not benefit much from the granting of additional land that they did not have the means to exploit. Because of these issues, the peasantry as a whole was not found to be as rebellious as Russian socialists had hoped. It seems that it was for this reason that groups such as 'Land and Freedom' began to look to other social forces in their attempts to make a Russian revolution.

The contradictions within the world-view of 'Land and Freedom' were ultimately resolved through a more decisive turn away from the 'economic' issue of land and towards the 'political' issue of a democratic system in Russia, the aim being to offer something concrete to all the non-farming elements discontented with the autocracy. The organisation therefore split in 1879, and an explicitly 'political' tendency in the Russian revolutionary movement – 'People's Will' – appeared. The 'Programme of the Executive Committee of People's Will' which appeared shortly after this event described the need for a seizure of political power by a provisional government which would turn over this power to a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage.<sup>26</sup> As regards the reforms to be carried out by this future assembly, 'People's Will' recommended a democratic legislature, the right of the village commune to manage its own internal affairs, universal suffrage, freedom of expression and the replacement of a standing army with a territorial militia. Economic proposals were also present in the programme, but these were formulated in a vague manner: factories and works were to pass into the hands of the workers and land was to go to the peasants, whilst faith was expressed in the socialist instincts of the Russian people as with 'Land and Freedom'. It was therefore assumed that a democratic revolution would automatically pave the way for significant socialist reform, which was apparently to be carried out using the state. Indeed, in the 'People's Will' conception, this state apparatus had the unlimited capacity to transform Russia's social life in a socialist direction. Thus it was not directly, through a nationwide peasant uprising, that the landlords would be liquidated via land occupations, the seizure of property and the like. They would be liquidated as a result of a series of laws or decrees passed by a revolutionary constituent assembly.

Plekhanov, as is well known, was initially unable to support this 'political' turn away from semi-anarchist ideas and broke with the majority of 'Land and Freedom' (which was thereafter called 'People's Will'), to help form the organisation 'Black Redistribution', whose main focus of agitation was intended to be the redistribution of the remaining gentry, state and church lands among

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26 See Shanin (ed.) 1983, pp. 207–12 for an English translation of this programme, which was written in August 1881.

the peasantry.<sup>27</sup> As such, he held to a distinctly conservative position, though he later started to modify his ideas, acknowledging that individualist, pro-capitalist tendencies were emerging in the village commune as a result of serfdom finally coming to an end. Adapting to this new discovery, 'Black Redistribution' advocated the preservation, where possible, of the collective features of village life which could serve as the basis for agriculture that was both collective and at the same time technologically more sophisticated. Specifically, it saw the 'artel',<sup>28</sup> the traditional Russian producers' co-operative, as a model on the basis of which socialist agriculture could be developed. Promoting these traditional organisations as a remedy to capitalist individualism, Plekhanov still appears to have believed that Russia had the potential to bypass an extended phase of capitalist development in the countryside.<sup>29</sup> However, his outlook during his 'Black Redistribution' phase nonetheless represented a slightly different view from that promoted by 'Land and Freedom', as there was greater recognition that the peasantry was not inherently socialist, that it had acquired tendencies towards capitalism and that consequently a socialist revolution in Russia would require at least some element of social engineering. Indeed, this recognition seems to have served as a stepping stone towards Plekhanov's final recognition of the need for the state and politics in a future Russian revolution, a recognition which eventually produced an attempt on his part at reconciliation with 'People's Will' during 1882, even though certain criticisms of the latter's strategic thinking were retained, criticisms which indeed became an established feature of Plekhanov's thinking.

These criticisms consisted in arguing that any immediate seizure of power by socialists such as 'People's Will' would be impossible if they acted alone. Nor would they gain the necessary support of the peasants and workers without a serious amount of preparatory agitation, given the low level of politicisation in these sections of society. Consequently, if a *coup d'état* did prove at all possible, it would probably have to take place with the support of the discontented elements of the bourgeoisie and the rural gentry. Under these conditions, any

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27 'Black Distribution' was not a long-lasting or successful organisation and appears to have been mainly inactive by the end of 1881, owing to arrests. However, isolated groups of supporters remained in various locations. It published four issues of the journal, *Chernyi Peredel*, during this period. Plekhanov's articles for this journal, which express its basic political outlook, can be found in Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 1, pp. 108–36.

28 These were informal and agreements often made by travelling workers in the same trade to form temporary households, sharing work, income and expenses, often on an equal basis.

29 See Baron 1954, p. 44 for further details.

constituent assembly would also meet with the indifference of the workers and the peasantry, and because of this it would most likely not introduce a socialist order so much as a bourgeois-democratic one, a regime which would implicitly permit the ongoing breakdown of the peasant commune, thus leading Russia further down the road of capitalist development.<sup>30</sup>

On the basis of these arguments, Plekhanov represented the political 'turn' of 'People's Will' as a largely unconscious rapprochement with the bourgeoisie, just as the insistence of 'Black Redistribution' on the traditional methods of 'economic' agitation among the peasantry represented a continued loyalty to the labouring classes. Apart from that, and perhaps surprisingly, he did not see this development as fatal to the cause of socialism. Quite the contrary, the emergence of a bourgeois-democratic revolutionary force would serve this cause rather well, as a democratic constitution and political freedom in Russia would make agitation among the workers and peasants a much easier task. If the socialist doctrine and strategy of 'People's Will' was therefore viewed as spurious, its capacity to aid the struggle for socialism was nonetheless taken seriously and, some time after the split, Plekhanov actually proposed the reunification of 'Black Redistribution' and 'People's Will' into a common organisation.<sup>31</sup>

This proposal was rejected, and afterwards Plekhanov admitted to limitations in some of the arguments he had advanced in an attempt to maintain the alliance with 'People's Will', particularly in relation to urban working class. During the 'Land and Freedom' period, Russian socialists had noted the greater receptivity to revolutionary agitation of factory workers compared to the farming peasants,<sup>32</sup> and the socialists' differing attitudes to 'economics' and 'politics' inevitably coloured their attitude to this promising constituency. Plekhanov had thus reported on essentially 'economic' workers' strikes in the pages of *Zemlia i volia*,<sup>33</sup> whereas 'People's Will' had approached workers in the factories with political material, emphasising the terrorist struggle and

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30 Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1 pp. 49–66.

31 See Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 2, pp. 4–5 and Plekhanov *et al.* 1882. The latter is a communication by the leaders of 'Black Redistribution' to the Executive Committee of People's Will' proposing reunification, despite certain unresolved political differences.

32 As has already been noted, a large number of those classified as peasants by the tsarist authorities did not actually work the land, but rented out their plots to other peasants who did, whilst working in other trades and in many cases becoming factory workers.

33 Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 1, pp. 36–55. For an example of a Populist leaflet agitating on 'economic' issues from this period, see S.N. 1878.

the importance of political strikes and uprisings by workers.<sup>34</sup> This involvement with the urban working class coincided with the creation of at least two independent workers' organisations during the 1870s: one in Odessa, the other in St. Petersburg, the first of which actually approached 'Land and Freedom' for advice regarding its aims and purpose.<sup>35</sup> In response, the supporters of the 'People's Will' tendency resolved to discourage these workers from pursuing their own 'economic' agenda by means of strikes and independent labour organisations as this tendency had, according to Plekhanov, ultimately intended to use them as units in a military uprising.<sup>36</sup>

Following his belated conversion to 'politics', for a period Plekhanov appears to have adopted the same attitude towards workers' organisations as 'People's Will', breaking with his previous support for strikes and calling on workers to refrain from pursuing their own class-specific goals in order to promote unity among anti-tsarist social forces. Evidently, Plekhanov initially thought this would represent a fairly harmless short-term compromise, in that he expected a fairly imminent bourgeois-democratic uprising in the years following the assassination of Alexander II.<sup>37</sup> Apart from that he appears to have taken the view that the workers were, for the most part, still quite politically inexperienced and inactive. As such, for all the promising signs in specific locations, there was no broad 'economic' movement on their part to ignore or betray. He therefore appears to have concluded that any appeal for a class-based workers'

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34 See *Rabochaia Gazeta* 1880–1. *Rabochaia Gazeta* was a newspaper of the 'People's Will' organisation directed towards factory workers. Three issues were published.

35 *Severnyi soiuz*, s.d.

36 This said, Plekhanov also makes it clear that, during the 'Land and Freedom' period, revolutionary organisations of workers had actually been instructed to leave politics to the intelligentsia and to focus on economic struggles (Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, 79–80).

37 Alexander II (1818–81, reigned from 1855) was assassinated by 'People's Will' terrorists on 1 March 1881, o.s. after several previous attempts on his life. Five members of 'People's Will' were executed for involvement in the conspiracy to kill him, though the assassin died at the scene. As a ruler, Alexander is often viewed as a reformer, owing to his support for ending serfdom (despite the resistance of the gentry), his relaxation of the censorship, his expansion of higher education and his introduction of partially representative bodies into local government. His more conservative side was shown in his opposition to Polish demands for independence, his suppression of non-Russian languages in the west of the Russian Empire and his inconsistent policy towards academic freedom. His 'emancipation' of the peasants was regarded as largely illusory by Russian socialists, and as a betrayal of the change initially promised, owing to the conditions attached to it which kept the peasants in poverty: the small size of the allotments, the large size of the redemption payments, the lack of access to the 'cut-off' lands and taxation.



and peasants' party implicit in the foundation of 'Black Redistribution' could wait a few months until the bourgeois-democratic revolution had begun and the workers had been stirred up by the demise of the autocracy becoming an actual fact.

The failure of such an uprising to emerge evidently caused Plekhanov to once again modify his position and, recognising that for the moment the autocracy would continue to rule Russia and that under its auspices capitalism would continue to grow in both town and countryside, he finally became reconciled to the idea of forming a workers' revolutionary political organisation. This change is one of the several reflected in the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group* (1884), which represented Plekhanov's first conscious attempt to define the terms of revolutionary political activity in Russia using Marxist ideas.<sup>38</sup> In this document, he noted that the still under-developed character of Russian capitalism – an observation which need not be read as contradicting his earlier acknowledgement that capitalism had already arrived in the country – had produced a weak bourgeoisie incapable of taking the initiative in the 'emancipation movement' directed against all the elements of a pre-capitalist system still present in Russian society, specifically against the despotic state. He also noted, somewhat ambiguously, that the socialist intelligentsia – by whom he evidently means groupings such as 'People's Will' – had to take over the leadership of this movement, without making it clear whether he still believed that bourgeois 'society' would eventually rise in response to a terror campaign on the part of this 'socialist intelligentsia' or whether the latter would have to carry out this task alone, a position he had previously rejected as unrealistic.

Reading between the lines, it seems more likely that Plekhanov still expected an anti-autocratic movement to emerge within the bourgeoisie at some point, hence his continued support for assassinations in the *Programme*, but at the same time recognised that his earlier prognosis had been over-optimistic. No longer expecting a constitution in the very immediate future, Plekhanov now identified the task of organising the elements of an independent, illegal workers' party as the main priority, and consequently he called on the socialist intelligentsia to begin this task 'immediately'. This said, the socialist intelligentsia was also obliged, in his view, to continue stirring up disaffected elements within bourgeois 'society' by means of terror directed against senior state officials. Plekhanov evidently assumed at this stage that the working class remained politically immature and that a workers' party would not emerge

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38 Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 353–8 or Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 55–8.



spontaneously; still less did he attribute the task of leading the battle for democracy to the working class.

Of course, this was not the only innovation evident in the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group*; far more noticeable was a new characterisation of socialism, which shows a marked development relative to the one given by 'People's Will'. In the latter, the final goal of the revolution was understood as 'the land and all the instruments of labour belonging to the entire people', a formula which seems to imply the wholesale nationalisation of economic resources. On the basis of this state property, labour co-operatives would be established both in the factories and in the countryside, as co-operative labour was viewed as the key to technological improvement. Products would be shared 'according to need', seemingly on an inter-communal basis, and though no mechanism that would facilitate this sharing is easy to deduce from the documents of 'People's Will', reference to a state structure based in the co-operatives perhaps indicates that this state would serve as the re-distribution mechanism. All this, of course was to be decreed by a revolutionary constituent assembly, 'People's Will' assuming that such a body would possess a free hand in the redesigning of Russia's economy, regardless of any question of economic necessity, differing class interests within the labouring population or any technological requirements necessary for socialism. By contrast, in the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group*, socialism was characterised as both possible and inevitable as a result of the high technological levels of 'civilised' countries whose contradictions, especially the class struggle, could only be overcome through 'the abolition of commodity production' and a specifically proletarian revolution which would replace the 'blind economic necessity' of the market with a consciously planned economy. This social revolution in the advanced countries would abolish both classes and the state, and would inevitably spread worldwide owing to 'the contemporary development of the international exchange of products', which would presumably draw those more backward countries, such as Russia, into some sort of world-economic plan.

Obviously, this new definition of socialism on the part of Plekhanov owed a huge amount to the thinking of Marx and Engels, through its referencing of class struggle, the international character of the worker's movement and socialism, the chaotic character of economic production for the market (commodity production) and the possibility of a more orderly socialist alternative as a result of the very process of capitalist development itself. Plekhanov's innovation lay in his attempt to relate this analysis to a country such as Russia in which capitalism, both within the village commune and within the cities, was only starting to acquire strength and the initial results of this exercise were

perhaps not entirely successful. The question that it inevitably posed was that of the chances of such a Marxian version of socialism being implemented in backward Russia at any point in the near future and, if so, whether there were any political and economic changes serving as preconditions that would be necessary for this to take place.<sup>39</sup>

The final stage of Plekhanov's evolution from anarcho-populist to 'political' Social Democrat is probably represented by the so-called *Second Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democrats*, written three years after the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group* and in which the attitude to the 'emancipation movement', the battle for democracy in Russia, was further revised.<sup>40</sup> Seemingly in the light of a collapse in the activity and organisation of 'People's Will' and the ongoing indifference to reform within bourgeois 'society', the task of leading this fight was now attributed to the revolutionary workers' organisation. However, just as the earlier *Programme* failed to clearly define a strategy or means through which socialism might be achieved, the *Second Draft Programme* suffered from similar problems in relation to democracy. Having rejected the 'People's Will' formula of a *coup d'état* followed by a constituent assembly, Plekhanov limited himself in this document to some fairly general phrases concerning the construction of workers' organisations committed to the overthrow of the autocracy and the agitation among the working class for a democratic constitution, in the belief that workers 'not content with isolated clashes with the government, will not delay in passing, at the

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39 At a much later stage in the history of Russian revolutionary thought, these 'preconditions' actually became a key point of contention between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the latter opposing the former's attempt to build socialism in a 'backward' country such as Russia on the grounds that such a project was impossible. In his early programmatic drafts, Plekhanov appears to place hopes in an international socialist economic system centred on Western Europe, into which a largely rural economy such as Russia could be integrated through the promotion of artels and co-operatives. As such, Plekhanov did not at this stage appear to advocate a phase of extended capitalist development in Russia so as to establish the appropriate 'economic base' for an advanced Russian socialism. He seems to have assumed that this base had already been built up in Western Europe, but because he was not entirely explicit about this, the overall strategy of Russian Social Democracy eventually became subject to rival interpretations.

In relation to this debate, it seems significant that Marx and Engels took a sympathetic attitude to Russian socialists such as Chernyshevskii and under this influence eventually appear to have supported the view that Russia would not have to imitate the path of development followed by Western-European economies, a path involving a lengthy capitalist phase that rendered senseless any short-term hope of socialist revolution.

40 See Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 358–62 or Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 81–4.

convenient time, to general and resolute attacks upon it'.<sup>41</sup> The character of these 'attacks' was not specified, and the reader is led to speculate that Plekhanov was at this point banking on some fairly spontaneous political uprising of workers, possibly modelled on the Paris Commune or the February uprising of 1848, rather than an uprising consciously guided by the Social Democrats. This said, the lack of detail is perhaps forgivable in a document which contains the word 'draft' in its title, and given that Plekhanov makes it clear that certain aspects of the programme would require development by the workers themselves, notably in relation to the minimum programme of economic aims, it seems fair to assume that these brief remarks were not intended to be the sum total of Social-Democratic ideas concerning the fight for democracy.

Indeed, the character of this fight was one which continued to be thrashed out in a dialogue between Plekhanov and his supporters, the former not having defined the matter with any precision in his basic programmatic writings. Probably the first example of this dialogue was the exchange between the St. Petersburg-based Blagoev group,<sup>42</sup> a short-lived network of reading circles which made contact with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group<sup>43</sup> in the

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41 Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 358–62 or Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 83.

42 Dimitar Blagoev (1856–1924) was a Bulgarian who studied at St. Petersburg University and was the founder of one of the first Social-Democratic organisations on Russian soil, in December 1883. Around thirty students from the university, the St. Petersburg Technology Institute and the city's Medical Academy helped organise around fifteen circles dedicated to political education among the local working class. They produced two issues of a newspaper, *Rabochii*, in 1885. In this same year, Blagoev was arrested and deported during a wave of arrests which seriously damaged the organisation. Despite this setback, the group continued its activities until it was finally uprooted in March 1887. A successor organisation ('The Brusnev Group') was established in 1889.

43 The 'Emancipation of Labour' group was founded in Geneva in 1883 by Plekhanov, Vera Ivanovna Zasulich (1849–1919), Pavel Borisovich Axelrod (1850–1928), Lev Grigor'evich Deutsch (1855–1941) and Vasilii Nikolaevich Ignatov (1854–84). All members of this group had previously been members of 'Land and Freedom' and had opposed the 'political' turn of the 'People's Will' tendency. They had also attempted – and failed – to preserve the traditional anti-state and 'economic' emphasis of the Populists through the publication, *Chernyi Peredel* ('Black Redistribution'). The foundation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group represented this trend's final conversion to a Social-Democratic point of view which emphasised the already established character of capitalism in Russia and the corresponding need to create a specifically-proletarian revolutionary organisation. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group engaged in the translation and publication of the works of Marx and Engels whilst also publishing theoretical works of their own, especially by Plekhanov and Axelrod. As a literary group, 'Emancipation of Labour' survived until

mid-1880s. Even prior to the *Second Draft Programme*, Blagoev had produced a draft programme of his own which, for all its Populist influence, contained a few original and attractively concrete tactical propositions.<sup>44</sup> In examining how the most oppressed layers in society – the peasants and the workers – could take over the struggle for a constitution abandoned by the bourgeoisie, he recognised that this could take place through the emergence of a series of ‘popular movements’, and his originality consisted in the view that these would be most successful if they initially demanded the reform of the autocracy, which was represented as a class struggle for the control of the state.

The initial reforms proposed by Blagoev included, but were not limited to: jury trials, democratisation of the *zemstva*, the Dumas and other local-government bodies,<sup>45</sup> equality before the law, state credit to the peasants, the reduction of taxes and state regulation of the market. Having achieved these aims, new goals were to be set so that the momentum gained in the battle for these objectives would not be dissipated, the result being a ‘popular movement’ that grew in ambition as it grew in size. The medium-term aim of this ‘movement’ would of course be a constituent assembly, but even at this point the posing of new, more radical goals would not cease: at this stage the explicit demands of land nationalisation and the transfer of factories to workers’ co-operatives were to be raised. Blagoev thus indicated very clearly that a constituent assembly obtained on the basis of mass popular pressure would have to pose the question of at least beginning the transition to socialism if it were to not suddenly lose this support. The struggle for political democracy would

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1903, when it was formally dissolved at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. Prior to this point it had worked in close collaboration with a number of Russian Social-Democratic organisations, including the Russian Social-Democratic Union, the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad and the *Iskra* newspaper.

44 Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 74–80.

45 The *zemstva* were rural assemblies created in 1864 as part of the agrarian reform introduced by Alexander II. Elected on the basis of a highly unequal suffrage which favoured landowners, they were nominally designed to represent the interests of the different social classes in the countryside. As organs of local government they played a notable role in developing public infrastructure. Russian liberals hoped that these institutions would eventually form the basis of a constitutional order in Russia, but in reality they lacked political independence from the state and, during the reign of Alexander III, their activities were more and more closely supervised by unelected officials. They were abolished after the October Revolution.

From 1870, most towns had municipal dumas, or assemblies that were also elected on the basis of a highly unequal, property- and estate-based suffrage. They served as urban equivalents to the *zemstva*.

therefore have to be combined with social struggles to transform the economic conditions of the working class and the poor.

Curiously, it seems that the influence of the Blagoev draft on Plekhanov's *Second Draft Programme* was fairly limited, amounting to Plekhanov's formal recognition that the working-class organisation could join in, and indeed lead, the fight for democracy. Blagoev's strategy of agitating for specific reforms was evidently rejected, possibly as a distraction from what for Plekhanov remained the key issue of the moment, agitating for a constituent assembly. The result is that Plekhanov's position of the late 1880s, when contrasted to that of Blagoev, can still appear to be one advocating a partial truce with the bourgeoisie up until the point at which the constituent assembly was actually won, on the basis that battles for immediate reforms of either a 'political' or an 'economic' character would at best dissipate Social-Democratic energy and at worst invite a split in the revolutionary camp. Precisely this type of reproach appears to have been directed against Plekhanov in the early 1890, and such a reproach can seem to have a certain amount of weight when the clear anti-bourgeois and anti-gentry character of certain campaigns promoted by Blagoev are considered: the abolition of the property qualifications in *zemstvo* and duma elections, the transfer of the tax burden to the rich, the nationalisation of the land and so forth. In contrast to this clear radicalism in favour of the labouring classes, Plekhanov can appear to be taking a position which sought a degree of cross-class collaboration.

Apparently in reply to this criticism, Plekhanov began to make it increasingly clear that he did not expect the bourgeoisie to give much support to a revolutionary movement against the autocracy, with the effect that even the campaign for a constituent assembly itself would bear a class-struggle character.<sup>46</sup> In discussing agitation on this issue, Plekhanov noted, for example, that the constituent assembly would have to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage, something the bourgeoisie would not support, any more than it would be pleased to remove the property and estate qualifications in the *zemstva*, as Blagoev had demanded. Provided that it was elected on the basis of universal suffrage, Plekhanov evidently anticipated the constituent assembly as being a site of serious class conflicts in which the key task of the workers' representatives would be to win the support of the mass of the peasantry, thus marginalising and possibly even ejecting the representatives of the bourgeoisie.

Whilst this 'reply' to Blagoev is convincing in the sense that, by the beginning of the 1890s, Plekhanov really did appear to have broken with all hope

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46 Plekhanov 1923-7, Vol. 3 pp. 410-21.

that the Russian bourgeoisie would play a positive role in any battle for democracy, it seems unsatisfactory as a tactical prescription for the Russian Social-Democratic movement. This is partially because there was very little in the tactic of focusing on the medium term 'political' objective of the constituent assembly which would permit the Social Democracy to distinguish itself in practical terms from an ordinary democratic party, especially one such as 'People's Will', which was both formally committed to socialism and which also had a record of activity among urban workers. The two would of course differ in their general, theoretical conception of socialism, and accordingly in their agrarian demands: the Social Democrats would oppose immediate land redistribution as a policy that would mainly benefit the richer peasants, whilst 'People's Will' would support it.<sup>47</sup> However, both parties broadly agreed that the peasantry as a revolutionary force was not as promising, and had for precisely this reason turned towards an urban working-class audience. In terms of their approach to this sector of society, they appear to have had a more or less identical programme that aimed at constitutional government.

Apart from that, the totally abstract character of Social-Democratic publicity at this stage seems odd. Plekhanov was prepared to advocate the virtues of a constitution and political democracy with no little tenacity, but at no point did he try to connect this panacea to more concrete problems faced by Russian workers, such as economic exploitation and abuse in the workplace, the danger of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment or extortion and corruption on the

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47 This is evident from both the programmatic drafts produced by Plekhanov in the 1880s, which are discussed above, and Lenin's polemics of the mid-1890s against the 'People's Will' organisation. In the former, the section of the programme dedicated to the rural economy no longer demands a 'black redistribution' of land, instead supporting a renegotiation of the 'emancipation' on terms more favourable to the peasants, along with a progressive income tax, legal protection for agricultural labourers and state support for rural co-operatives. Behind this set of demands, there appears to be a recognition of the fundamentally capitalist and class character of the countryside, and they seem designed to mobilise the rural poor against the rural rich in various different ways. The farming peasantry as a whole would benefit from a renegotiation of the terms of land transfer from the gentry. Meanwhile, the poorer farms would be more likely to gain from state-supported co-operatives, which would presumably be funded by the progressive tax against the better off. Finally, those peasants who were either landless (such as the families of former domestic serfs) or unable to make their allotments economically viable could benefit from a struggle against the landowners as a whole (both peasant and gentry) for rights as rural proletarians. This reasoning is of course far from explicit in the programmatic drafts, but at a later stage the agrarian programme of the Russian Social Democrats was explained in precisely this way by Lenin. See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 1, pp. 129–332.

part of officials. Nor did he offer even a sketch of how workers might begin to fight back against these and other problems. In this respect, Plekhanov's thinking at this stage seems to have had a rather utopian, sectarian flavour, revealing a profound detachment from the lives of the working class and the poor, for all his formal commitment to Marxism. For all his concern to precisely define the various features of the future democratic and socialist order, Plekhanov seems to have had relatively few ideas as to how the working class was to attain this happy state.

Plekhanov's characteristic failure to articulate a convincing practical manifesto for the Social Democracy, along with his seeming inability to orientate it towards concrete expressions of protest on the part of Russian workers, is best illustrated in his attitude towards strikes. Strikes were a far-from-unknown phenomenon in Russia during the 1870s and 1880s and, given their capacity to illustrate the Marxist conception of class antagonism, they seem to have been met with a strange indifference on his part in the years immediately following his supposed adoption of a Social-Democratic outlook, even if in an earlier period, when he was still active in 'Land and Freedom', he took a somewhat keener interest in this 'economic' phenomenon. This indifference can only be partially explained by the significant decline in industrial disputes between 1887 and 1892, as he clearly considered himself a Marxist several years prior to the earlier of these two dates, during a time when a strike wave seems to have brought about a notable piece of tsarist legislation dealing with the factories.<sup>48</sup> An analysis of the relationship between this piece of (admittedly limited) reform and the demands and struggles of the workers leading up to it is impossible to find in Plekhanov's writings of this period. It was left to the next generation of his followers, to Lenin in particular, to explain this episode as a concrete instance of working-class struggle, moreover one yielding certain definite 'economic' gains for the workers themselves.

Given some of Plekhanov's later statements, particularly his assertion that the immediate task of the proletariat was the overthrow of the autocracy, it is tempting to view the reason for Plekhanov's near-silence on strikes during this turbulent period as being driven by a belief that no serious labour movement was possible under tsarism, and that Social Democrats were therefore obliged to direct their efforts towards the 'political' matter of achieving a constitution. If this were the case, subsequent history falsified the assumption quite

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48 For an account of the strikes of 1885–6 and their effect on legislation regulating the right of employers to fine workers for defective work, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 35–40. By contrast, Plekhanov only appears to acknowledge these strikes as an occasion for protesting against police brutality: Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 2, pp. 391–2.



dramatically, in the sense that workers proved quite capable of fighting for improved working conditions even under the autocracy, with the effect that an 'economic' field of activity not anticipated as significant by the founders of Russian Social Democracy eventually came to dominate the activity of the Social-Democratic circles working in Russia. By the mid-1890s, Social-Democratic 'agitation' had ceased to revolve around talk of a constitution and was replaced with active intervention in these strikes, as well as the provision of various assistance, advice and services to the strikers.<sup>49</sup>

Reflecting these seemingly unexpected developments, the influential 1894 pamphlet, *On Agitation*, written by the Vilno Social Democrats Iulius Osipovich Martov (1873–1923) and Arkady Iosifovich Kremer (1865–1935),<sup>50</sup> argued that workers could only be politicised following a period in which they fought for their immediate economic interests, first at the level of individual enterprises and then through industry-wide strikes. On the basis of the first of these experiences they would meet with the intervention of the local police and authorities, but only having participated in a strike involving several districts would workers naturally draw the conclusion that the arrests, criminal charges and so forth accompanying a strike were not the result of peculiarly vindictive personalities in the local administration so much as the general character of the state, particularly its failure to allow workers civil rights. On this basis, the struggle for concrete reforms in the area of rights could begin – a struggle which would serve as a preparatory period to the overthrow of the autocracy.

Thus, rather than through verbal and written propaganda, workers would inevitably draw conclusions based on their own experiences, and the role of the Social Democrats would be reduced to that of 'speeding up' the transition from economic, through political, finally to revolutionary consciousness. This they would do by providing assistance and advice to workers in every campaign they chose to fight, regardless of its political level, helping workers formulate and publicise concrete demands, organise their forces and resources, but without explicitly stating the type of goals the workers ought to be pursuing. Because the transition towards revolutionary class-consciousness was

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49 For an extensive collection of documents from this period translated into English, see Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 123–220.

50 Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 192–205. Martov was, of course, subsequently a key figure in the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and one of the main leaders of Menshevism. Kremer, by contrast, remained a Bundist all his life and remained closely associated with the city of Vilno. After many years abroad, he returned to the city in 1921 and lived there for the rest of his life, at a time when the city was part of independent Poland.



seen as more or less inevitable, and as the by-product of capitalist industrialisation, in which workers were concentrated in ever greater numbers in ever greater enterprises, the role of Social-Democratic propagandists was reduced, and a large part of the work of winning proletarians to a Social-Democratic point of view was attributed to the impersonal forces of the capitalist and autocratic systems.

One of Plekhanov's subsequent responses to these arguments was the observation that a preliminary, purely economic stage of struggle was impossible, owing to the immediate intervention of the police and the authorities.<sup>51</sup> However, this observation, though clearly valid in itself, is not particularly relevant as a criticism of the strategic thinking of the pamphlet. Martov and Kremer, in describing an 'economic stage', appeared to be referring to the consciousness of industrial workers with minimal experience of political matters and to the significance of agitational material adapted to such an audience. They were not therefore referring to the strikes themselves in which, as a result of the actions of the authorities, it could reasonably be assumed that even the most innocent worker would soon be taught a sharp lesson in autocratic politics. In other words, Martov and Kremer advocated the distribution of leaflets on purely economic questions among striking or restive workers and defended the practice of failing to mention broader political topics in some of these leaflets, such as the need for democracy and a constituent assembly. This was because it was assumed that a strike or demonstration would set in motion a more or less rapid and spontaneous process of worker radicalisation, a process which would culminate in the emergence of mass revolutionary consciousness.

Plekhanov was on somewhat firmer ground in his opposition to Martov and Kremer when he argued that workers could be attracted to political struggle independent of workplace-centred movements. He pointed out numerous instances where this either had occurred or where there were realistic possibilities of such activities occurring: pro-democracy demonstrations, resistance

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51 Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 82–6. These observations were made as a broader critique of *On Agitation*, which also noted the difficulty of determining which 'stage' of consciousness a particular group of workers had reached, which criticised the pamphlet's faith in the power of capitalist development to drive workers to socialist conclusions and which argued that, if an average workers' consciousness did develop in a stepwise fashion, this process should not be reflected in Social-Democratic literature on the grounds that the Social Democrats represented the most advanced layers of the working class and because they were obliged to link everyday problems experienced by workers to the final goal of socialism in their agitation and political education (Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 67–102).

to pogroms, protests and petitions against arbitrary or brutal conduct by officials and the struggle for statehood on the part of the Poles.<sup>52</sup> It seems evident that workers would have been capable of participating in such movements, even if at the time *On Agitation* was written they appear to have been showing a distinct preference for 'economic' strikes. The authors of the pamphlet could therefore be accused of a rather reductionist approach to the art of agitation, one which could potentially lead to a whole series of political opportunities being missed. Indeed, it seems that precisely such reservations were soon apparent among other Russian Social Democrats, regardless of their general sympathy for the Martov-Kremer approach, with the effect that by the mid-1890s, a more general 'political' agitation was being conducted alongside, and to a degree separate from, the 'stagist' method recommended by *On Agitation*.

Two articles by Lenin from this period illustrate this more diversified approach fairly well. Alongside his very detailed examinations of the conditions in one particular enterprise, the Thornton Mill,<sup>53</sup> a clear example of the 'preliminary economic stage' of agitation, we find a separate article by the same author on the growing governmental suspicion towards the Sunday-School movement.<sup>54</sup> The latter provided courses to adult workers and many of the teachers, sympathetic towards the revolutionary movement, would direct promising workers to the illegal circles, a fact which had caused the government to plan counter-measures.<sup>55</sup> Lenin's article against these planned limitations on workers' access to education evidently has little to do with economics. Instead it takes into account workers' lives away from the shop floor and addresses their cultural needs. Significantly, it seems that such subject matter could not in any meaningful sense be 'prepared' by any 'preliminary economic agitation' and it is likely that a large part of the intended audience of this article had never participated or even thought of participating in a strike. Consequently, the Martov-Kremer scheme does not appear to be observed here, even if it evidently inspired the detailed analysis of labour relations at the Thornton Mill, and many similar exposés of factory conditions published by the Social Democrats around this time.

In his article on the Sunday schools, Lenin appeared to place hope in the capacity of fairly large numbers of workers to acquire sophisticated political

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52 Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 87–8 and 91–6.

53 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 81–6.

54 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 87–92.

55 Probably the most famous revolutionary Sunday-School teacher was Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (1869–1939), who subsequently married Lenin. She gives a short account of her activities in Krupskaya 1930, pp. 5–6 and 9–10.

and economic ideas, not merely as a result of many 'bitter lessons' like arrest, imprisonment and exile, but as a direct result of reading and discussing Social-Democratic literature. Whereas in *On Agitation*, class-consciousness was understood in terms of the recognition by workers of the common interests and situation of all their fellow proletarians, along with the attendant need to act in concert, with the effect that the bigger and wider the strike, the closer the participants approached truly 'class' as opposed to 'section of class' consciousness, Lenin seems to have taken a slightly more sophisticated view of the phenomenon. In his view, workers were class-conscious not just when they shared the broadest notions of practical solidarity with fellow members of their class – though the importance of this factor is in no way denied – but when they clearly understood the impossibility of either the autocracy or the bourgeoisie of doing anything but harm to their situation, the attendant conclusion being that both must be done away with, when they clearly understood all the different ways this harm was caused. Workers could therefore be class-conscious in the highest degree by understanding Marxist positions on the economy and the state, along with the connection of their interests to a socialist and democratic future, even though they may have never personally participated in a strike.

Class-consciousness for Lenin therefore had its origins rather more in workers' interactions with the Social Democrats than in their experiences at the hands of the authorities and the police. This idea has the merit of allowing that workers do not actually need to suffer at the hands of the state in order to understand their role: they are quite capable of learning from the misfortunes of others in this regard, and their knowledge, their class-consciousness, can be greatly developed through the regular supply of information and analysis – in other words, journalism – dealing with the workers' movement and any broader revolutionary movement against the autocracy. Thus, in Lenin's thinking, even as early as the mid-1890s, a significant amount of importance was attached to the creation of a regularly appearing Social-Democratic newspaper along with the establishment of an underground organisation dedicated to the systematic distribution of such literature among a working class already in ferment.<sup>56</sup> The purpose of this type of journalism was not to promote a series of pre-formed

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<sup>56</sup> See Krupskaya 1930, pp. 11–14, where the author describes the attempt to create a newspaper for the St. Petersburg Social-Democratic movement, *Rabochee Delo*, in which Lenin's article on Sunday schools ('What are our Ministers Thinking About?') was to appear. Police raids on the press and arrests prevented even the first issue of the newspaper appearing, and resulted in the exiling of Lenin, Krupskaya and many other St. Petersburg activists who were later involved in the *Iskra* newspaper and its supporting apparatus.

conclusions as to what the immediate aims of the workers' movement should be, or to articulate the 'next steps' of various campaigns begun on the basis of 'purely economic' agitation, so much as the general political education of its readership.

Specifically, concrete abuses of both an economic and a political character, along with the strikes and other rebellions they provoked, were to be explained in the light of the general character of the economic and political system as a whole, so that workers actually engaging in struggle would acquire clearer understanding of the nature of the enemy they were fighting and would be able to use this knowledge in order to select appropriate tactics in the struggle against it.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, one aim appears to have been the reduction of the latter's dependence on intellectuals in the day-to-day conduct of campaigns, so that workers increasingly made their own independent decisions as a result of their greater political knowledge and understanding. To put it another way, the Social Democrats were to promote class-consciousness rather than direct concrete class struggles on the grounds that, where sufficient class-consciousness exists, clashes between the classes become a matter of inevitability.

The phenomenon of 'Economism', which plays an absolutely central role in the present work, represented something of a reaction against Lenin's tactical position, and more than anything else it amounted to a continued and somewhat one-sided defence of the tactics first developed in *On Agitation*. As such, and despite its somewhat misleading name, it does not appear to have represented the wholesale rejection of 'politics', so much as an emphasis on the stepwise, 'stagist' acquisition of class-consciousness by means of practical experience. Specifically, the 'Economists', whose views were articulated in publications such as *Rabochaia Mysl'*, the newspaper of the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle from 1897 to 1902, the émigré journal *Rabochee Delo* and the Jewish Bund, were charged with placing particular emphasis on the 'first phases' of the Martov-Kremer scheme, in other words the struggle for immediate economic improvements at the level of individual enterprises, whilst allegedly paying insufficient attention to the task of preparing workers for a revolutionary uprising. This position can be seen as problematic in that, if in 1894, the authors of *On Agitation* could argue that the process of worker radicalisation would occur more or less 'spontaneously', and that Social-Democratic intellectuals merely had to assist this process by articulating the next step in a fixed sequence which led to class and revolutionary consciousness, the experience of the late 1890s increasingly cast doubt on this optimistic prognosis. By the end of the decade it had become increasingly clear that

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57 A clear example of this way of thinking can be found in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 122–7.

the huge strike wave of 1894–7, on the basis of which ‘Economist’ thinking acquired popularity, had not produced the revolution expected by many supporters of the Martov-Kremer strategy, an expectation which was based on the stormy ‘political’ clashes between workers and the police which attended the strikes.<sup>58</sup> On the contrary, and for all the workers’ scorn for the authorities, the main outcome of the campaign had only been a new labour law limiting the working day and introducing holidays.<sup>59</sup> Moreover this concession, rather than serving as the basis for a radicalisation of workers’ consciousness, coincided with a lull in the movement, the strike struggles dying down for a period without having produced clear evidence of politicisation among the mass of the working class.

In this situation, it seems that a section of the Russian Social Democracy began more or less exclusively to agitate around ‘economic’ questions in the hope that a new industrial movement would emerge, the assumption being that once the strikes began again, a process of radicalisation and politicisation would follow. Obviously, in the absence of any clear evidence that such a process had taken place in the previous strike wave, this can be viewed as something of a weak, possibly even dogmatic position to take. If several years earlier, the simplistic, rather one-sided aspects of *On Agitation* could be forgiven in the light of the innovative way in which it showed how Plekhanov’s Russian supporters could engage with an actual movement of the urban working-class, Lenin’s subsequent contribution to the tactical debate, not to mention the earlier views of Blagoev, did not appear to make *On Agitation* the most likely tactical manual for a period in which strikes were increasingly a rarity. Consequently, complaints on the part of the supporters of Plekhanov regarding the persistence of an ‘economic’ trend were voiced with increased frequency during the final years of the decade.

Apart from the obvious ‘narrowing’ of the choice of themes raised in agitational material, ‘Economism’ was also charged with surrendering the predominant role of the proletariat in Russia’s bourgeois-democratic revolution, a role implicitly attributed to it since Plekhanov’s *Second Draft Programme*, in which the incapacity of the bourgeoisie itself to carry out this revolution was declared. By emphasising only the day-to-day needs of urban workers and forgetting about even the ‘minimum programme’ of the Social Democrats – the

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58 There is reference to some of these clashes between workers and the police in Chapter 4 of the collection, (in the section ‘Reply to Axelrod’s Pamphlet *On the Question of the Contemporary Tasks and Tactics of Russian Social Democracy*).

59 This was the ‘Law of 2 June 1897’, the subtleties of which are examined in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 267–315.

fight for a democratic constitution – the ‘Economists’ appeared to be doing a favour to the ‘socialist intelligentsia’ traditionally gathered around the Populist parties, towards whom the more politicised workers would gravitate so long as the Social Democrats themselves failed to speak on broader political questions which did not touch directly on ‘economic’ strikes. It was in this way that the ‘Economist controversy’ was born.

From the brief and inevitably incomplete account just given, a number of conclusions may be drawn. Probably the most significant of these concerns the degree to which ‘Economism’ was rooted in problems connected to specifically Russian revolutionary thought, in so far as it appears to have originated in an attempt to give concrete tactics and strategy to the Russian supporters of Plekhanov’s rather abstract critique of Populism. Prior to the appearance of ‘Economism’, there appears to have been precious little success on the part of the supporters of the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group in meaningfully engaging with working-class struggles, even though opportunities for this did occasionally present themselves. In this sense, ‘Economism’, in so far as it recommended a sympathetic and constructive approach to actually-existing strikes, represented an important step forward in the history of Russian Social Democracy. Above all, it expressed very clearly the class loyalties of the Social Democracy, which had previously only been declared by Plekhanov, but scarcely demonstrated in practice.

At the same time, ‘Economism’ was only one of several tactical lines developed by the Russian supporters of Plekhanov, and in comparison with the approaches of Blagoev and Lenin, it can be viewed as a somewhat narrow prescription. ‘Economism’ can also be criticised for its rather optimistic faith in the gradual radicalisation of working-class consciousness as a result of practical involvement in struggle, an assumption that was not entirely vindicated by the history of Russia’s workers’ movement during the 1890s. The failure of its expectations in this regard poses the question of how it intended to convert ‘economic struggles’ into genuinely revolutionary ones, and this question does not appear to have been effectively answered by the ‘Economists’. Possibly for this reason, ‘Economist’ tactics appear to have lost some support, especially among those Russian Social Democrats most closely associated with Plekhanov and the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group towards the end of the 1890s.

This partial decline in influence did not mean that a section of Russian Social Democrats had begun to consciously turn their backs on strikes with specifically ‘economic’ goals, but it did suggest that a greater effort had to be made on the part of Social-Democratic agitators to ensure that workers drew the appropriate Social-Democratic conclusions from their experiences. From this point on, instead of simply indicating the ‘next steps’ in a campaign, whilst

allowing 'nature to take its course' in relation to workers' consciousness, agitators had to convince strikers as early as possible that the entire economic and autocratic system was against them, whilst revealing to them the various techniques used by these systems to deceive, pacify and ultimately defeat rebellious workers. Workers could then use this knowledge and theoretical equipment to plan ever more ambitious, sophisticated and successful forms of resistance which, if they were still connected to some fairly concrete grievances, were nonetheless informed by a revolutionary analysis of society. Even if these rebellions were not strong enough to finally overthrow the authorities and the bosses, they nonetheless expressed a consistent and implacable hostility to them from the start.

With the development of these significantly more sophisticated and aggressive agitational tactics, it seems fairly clear that those who remained advocates of 'Economism' found themselves on the right wing of the Russian Social Democracy by default. Significantly, this new positioning appears to have coincided with the emergence of the Bernstein controversy in the German Social Democracy,<sup>60</sup> with the effect that the strategic prescription of 'Economism' – apparently flawed as a means of bringing the working class to revolutionary class consciousness – could find a new lease of life in the service of those who did not believe revolution was a viable option, and who on this basis began to openly attack the basic ideas of Plekhanov and Marxism generally.<sup>61</sup> Especially in the period between the first two Congresses of the RSDLP, it was at times hard to distinguish between the 'Economist controversy' and the debate on revisionism, in which the fundamentals of Marxism were subjected to scrutiny.

Bearing in mind all these factors, the question of whether 'Economism' was actually a form of Russian Marxism, or whether it was not an attempt to break with this Marxism, can only be answered in a fairly nuanced way. In reality, it

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60 This was a challenge by a leading Party theoretician, Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), to the political positions outlined in the programme of the German Social Democrats, which had been approved at their 1891 Party Congress in Erfurt. These positions were strongly influenced by the ideas of Marx and Engels, even if they were subject to a certain amount of criticism by Engels for their failure to articulate a clearly revolutionary conception of the transition to socialism. From 1896, Bernstein published a series of articles in the German Party's theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, challenging various aspects of Marxist thinking, including the theory of value, the notion that capitalism abolished the middle class and the idea that the capitalist economic system would bring about its own crisis, eventually collapsing. Corresponding to these criticisms, he rejected the perspective of socialist revolution, advocating instead the democratisation of capitalism and the struggle for piecemeal reforms.

61 The connection between 'Economism' and the 'revisionist' challenge to Marxist doctrinal orthodoxy is particularly apparent in Chapter 4 of the collection.



seems that 'Economism' was a tactical prescription which was initially used in the service of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group's thinking, only to be eventually discarded as unfit for purpose, especially where it was used in isolation, as it could not credibly claim to introduce revolutionary ideas into the working class. Thereafter, it appears that the practice of orientating predominantly towards 'economic' struggles, whilst remaining silent on the overall goals of Social Democracy, was taken up by those with a more sceptical attitude towards Marxism's revolutionary ambitions,<sup>62</sup> and it is this ambiguous legacy which was inherited by groups such as *Rabochee Delo*. If, on the one hand, these groups did formally subscribe to a Marxist outlook, the contradiction between this outlook and the somewhat discredited tactics they supported does not appear to have been clear to them, and in an attempt to defend their tactical positions, they appear to have drifted on more than one occasion towards an outright break with Marxism. Behind such displays of inconsistency and instability one can detect a willingness to defend above all the current 'eclectic' practices of a more conservative section of the Russian Social Democracy that were not strongly rooted in principle or in any particular programmatic statement. Attempts to alter these practices in line with more consistent theoretical thinking were resisted, with the effect that *Rabochee Delo* eventually set itself up against both the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and the revisionists. This makes it quite difficult to give a precise categorisation of *Rabochee Delo*'s thinking, but as will be seen from the documents in the present collection, the 'Economist' tactic of 'agitation by stages' was one of its most consistent features.

### Organisational Questions in the RSDLP

In terms of its organisational history, Russian Social Democracy can trace its roots back to the mid-1880s, with the foundation of the émigré 'Emancipation of Labour' group, which was primarily a literary and publishing circle, dedicated both to original works of theory, and to translations and re-publications of the works of Marx and Engels. Right from the beginning, this circle sought to establish groups of sympathisers inside Russia, but these ambitions were frustrated by the arrest of Lev Deutsch in 1884 and his subsequent transportation to Siberia for his previous involvement in terrorist activity.<sup>63</sup> Despite this

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62 See previous note.

63 In 1876, Deutsch had taken part in the attempted assassination of an informer, one Nikolai Eliseevich Gorinovich (1855–1912), whilst a member of a socialist circle in Kiev. The victim was stabbed and, when his assailants believed him to be dead, his face was



setback, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group appears to have been contacted by a group of sympathisers in St. Petersburg led by Blagoev, whose programmatic draft is examined above. This organisation had organised numerous workers' discussion circles and, prior to its finally being broken up by the police in 1887, published two issues of the newspaper, *Rabochii*.

At around this time it also seems that an attempt to found a more wide-reaching, nation-wide network of Social-Democratic organisations was made by supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the key figure in this development being Mikhail Brusnev.<sup>64</sup> This became known as the 'Workers' Union', and according to one source, branches of this organisation appear to have been present in around ten different Russian towns by the early 1890s.<sup>65</sup> During this time, small worker groups appear to have marked May Day more or less in secret, and the Workers' Union were involved in a small number of strikes. However, at this stage the greater part of Social-Democratic activity seems to have revolved around the discussion of Marxist and socialist literature, which, because of its illegality, had to be smuggled from abroad. It seems that the aim of this activity was to produce a small layer of politically educated worker leaders who could act as the cadre of a future Social-Democratic Party.

A wave of strikes between 1894–7 provided the opportunity for the workers attending Social-Democratic circles to test themselves as agitators, the result being something of a reorganisation of the Russian Social Democracy. Details remain obscure, but with the relaunch of the local branches of the Union as 'Unions of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class' towards the end

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disfigured with acid to prevent identification. Deutsch was later arrested in Freiberg, Germany, and deported to face trial. He was sentenced to 13 years of hard labour in the Transbaikalian region and was obliged to remain in Eastern Siberia following the completion of his sentence. He absconded and fled Russia in 1901 via Vladivostok, moving to London and becoming involved with *Iskra* along with the other members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.

64 Mikhail Ivanovich Brusnev (1864–1937) came to St. Petersburg in 1881 to study at the Technology Institute and rose to prominence as a leader of the St. Petersburg Social Democrats in 1889. He subsequently worked in a Moscow railway workshop, using his access to the transport network to bring Social-Democratic circles in several towns into contact with one another. He was arrested in 1892. After serving four years in prison he was exiled to Siberia. During this time he was involved in expeditions exploring the islands of the Arctic Ocean under Alexander Vasilevich (1874–1920), the future commander of the 'White' forces in the Russian Civil War. Brusnev was an active member of an engineering trade union during the 1905–7 uprising and was elected to the Second Duma as a Bolshevik, but he later appears to have withdrawn from political activity.

65 Akimov, 1969c, p. 285.

of 1895, it seems that workers themselves were given greater responsibility in the production of leaflets and proclamations, and there was a movement away from the idea that the local organisations should be led exclusively by intellectuals, who up to this point has acted as 'teachers' in the workers' circles and as producers, transporters and distributors of clandestine literature. At around this time, plans were once again made for an underground Social-Democratic newspaper in St. Petersburg and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group was also tasked with publishing a regular theoretical collection, *Rabotnik*. The transportation of this and other material was made more systematic, and a centre for the smuggling of this contraband appears to have been established in Berlin. The émigré supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group were tasked with this and related functions as the 'Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad'.

The plans to develop the Russian Social-Democratic movement that were hatched in the mid-1890s were, as with previous attempts, hampered by arrests, with the effect that the planned newspaper, *Rabochee Delo*,<sup>66</sup> never saw the light of day and the main initiators of the plans were removed from activity for several years. With these setbacks, it seems that certain advocates of 'Economism' acquired a dominant position in the St. Petersburg movement, and that this group showed little interest in developing the organisation of the Union on a national scale. Consequently, it seems that the focus of efforts in this direction moved away from the capital in the late 1890s, with Social-Democratic groups in Vilno and Kiev playing a more significant role as initiators of what would eventually become the RSDLP. A specifically Jewish socialist group operated in Vilno from 1891, which had opposed the firm support of local Polish socialist groups for the re-establishment of a Polish state on the grounds that this conceded to anti-Semitic Polish nationalism.<sup>67</sup> Orienting towards Russia rather than Poland, the group organised among Jewish handicraft workers who were in any case often separated from other ethnic groups into ghettos and separate towns, speaking a separate language, Yiddish. Within the townships, numerous mutual-aid organisations emerged among workers, many of which took on a trade-union like character, fighting to maintain wage rates, to control hiring practices and engaging

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66 Though this newspaper shared its name with the later (1899–1902) journal of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, there is no connection between the two. Key figures on this earlier *Rabochee Delo* included Lenin and Martov, both of whom went on to edit *Iskra*, and practical leaders of the pro-*Iskra* faction of the RSDLP such as Krupskaya and Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovskii.

67 For a useful account of the relations between this Jewish socialist circle and its ethnically Polish counterparts, see Zimmerman 1998.

in strikes. Meanwhile in Kiev, the merging of pre-existing groups supporting the Polish Social Democrats, the Polish Socialist Party and the Union of Russian Social-Democrats produced a 'Union of Struggle', broadly modelled on the earlier experiment in St. Petersburg, members of which started producing the newspaper, *Rabochaia Gazeta*, in 1897.<sup>68</sup>

The Vilno group eventually founded a specifically Jewish Social-Democratic Party – the General Jewish Labour Union ('Bund') of Poland and Russia – in the autumn of 1897. This came at a time when individuals connected to the Kiev Union of Struggle were attempting to contact Social Democrats in other Russian cities with the aim of re-establishing a nation-wide organisation of Social Democrats. The result of these combined efforts was the formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which incorporated the Bund as an 'autonomous' section, which was granted the right to publish material in the Yiddish language and to maintain the internal structures it had established at its founding Congress. As has already been noted, this First Congress of the RSDLP was followed by a mass of arrests which utterly disabled the Social-Democratic movement in Kiev, leaving the Bund as probably the largest Social-Democratic organisation in the Russian Empire by the turn of the twentieth century. However, as a specifically Jewish organisation, it does not appear to have played a particularly central role in the further development of the RSDLP. This task instead fell primarily to the group of St. Petersburg activists who had been arrested during the raids of 1895–6, and who by early 1900 had completed their terms of transportation and were free to return to European Russia.

Having established extensive contacts with the various local Social-Democratic groups in Russia, three individuals from this group – Lenin, Martov and Potresov<sup>69</sup> – eventually left Russia, their aim being to join forces with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in the production of both theoretical

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68 See Eidelman 1921.

69 Alexander Nikolaievich Potresov (1869–1934) participated in Social-Democratic circles whilst a student in St. Petersburg during the early 1890s and subsequently took part in the 'Union of Struggle'. As an editor of *Iskra* he appears to have played a rather passive role whilst contributing financially to the newspaper. As a right-wing Menshevik, he supported Russia's participation in World War I. After the October Revolution, a brief association with the Whites saw him arrested in 1919 and briefly detained, during which time he became ill with tuberculosis. Living under surveillance, he was eventually allowed to leave the USSR in 1925. In emigration he collaborated with Kerensky in anti-Bolshevik journalism and helped assemble collections of documents connected to the history of the RSDLP. He is often referred to by the pseudonym 'Starover', especially in connection with the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

literature and a regular newspaper, *Iskra*, for the RSDLP. Subsequently this newspaper became the central organising force of the Party, partially owing to the extensive contacts established by its Editorial Board and partially due to its practice of maintaining a network inside Russia dedicated to the transportation of illegal literature over the Russian border and its distribution around the country.

Just as the newspaper itself more and more took on the role of an unofficial mouthpiece for the RSDLP, this network seems to have more and more played the role of a Provisional Central Committee of the Party, co-ordinating the efforts of the local groups and helping them to combine their efforts. These successes came at the price of numerous conflicts with opponents from the 'Economist' camp, such as supporters of *Rabochee Delo* in the emigration and groups such as the Bund inside Russia, but by the autumn of 1902, *Iskra* had won the support of several of the most important local organisations in the RSDLP. On this basis it made serious preparations for a Second Congress of the Party. This involved the establishment of an 'Organising Committee' which nominally involved all the main groups considering themselves part of the RSDLP but which was in reality dominated by the supporters of *Iskra* and their close allies from the southern regional Social-Democratic newspaper, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. The result of a lengthy and seemingly quite democratic organising process was a Second RSDLP Congress which met in Brussels in July 1903, at which a majority of delegates were nominally supporters of *Iskra*.

Most of the documents in the latter part of the collection are related the disputes that emerged within the *Iskra* faction at the Second Congress of the RSDLP and which resulted in a division of the faction into two opposing sub-groups – one led by Martov, the other by Lenin. This split was a lasting and apparently significant one in that even today, the two main factions within pre-revolutionary Russian Social Democracy, the 'Bolsheviks' ('majority'-ite) and the 'Mensheviks' ('minority'-ite), are named according to the voting patterns in this Congress, where Martov ended the meeting with slightly fewer supporters than Lenin.

The split appears to have had its immediate origins not so much in the debates which took place in the sessions of the Congress itself, and which are represented in a very complete stenographic record,<sup>70</sup> but in the caucuses of the *Iskra* faction, the debates of which were not minuted and the central focus of which appears to have been the selection of candidates for the Central Committee of the Party. Given the numerical dominance of *Iskra*-sympathising

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70 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978.

delegates at the Congress, the decision of the caucus would in effect have decided the matter, but for the fact that the grouping was unable to agree among itself and thus vote as a bloc in the plenary sessions of the Congress. Instead, at least according to the accounts given by the leading figures in the majority, Lenin and Pavlovich, a group around Martov that was discontented with the idea of electing a Central Committee made up entirely of members of the *Iskra* organisation to lead what remained a multi-tendency Party, decided to appeal to the non-*Iskra* delegates for support for their Central-Committee slate of somewhat broader political composition than that of the caucus majority. Specifically, they appear to have aimed at the inclusion of at least one supporter of the newspaper, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, and hoped that this alternative would be favoured by the supporters of the Bund, *Rabochee Delo* and the few neutrals at the Congress, owing to the these groups' inability to put forward a credible slate of their own.

Martov's strategy appears to have been undermined by a miscalculation, in that Martov reckoned on the votes of non-*Iskra* delegates, a significant proportion of whom left the Congress before its work was completed as a political protest against some of its decisions. The five representatives of the Jewish Bund had been given specific instructions by their organisation aimed at preventing attempts by the RSDLP Congress to reorganise the Bund's internal structures. This meant that, as well as an outline constitution for the Party, these delegates had arrived at the Congress with a series of minimum organisational demands, the satisfaction of which was a key condition for their remaining in the RSDLP.<sup>71</sup> Martov appears to have been unaware of this, a state of affairs facilitated by Congress declaring such 'binding instructions' to be banned,<sup>72</sup> despite the impossibility of enforcing such a ban, and equally appears to have been surprised by the departure of two pro-*Rabochee Delo* delegates. The loss of these seven votes eventually gave the Lenin group an absolute majority in the Congress overall, but this was not before the Martov supporters used their brief period of numerical superiority to modify the Party constitution worked out by Lenin in several respects.

These modifications included a loosening of the definition of a Party member to include those who were not participating in the work of official Party bodies, with the effect that 'opposition' groups such as *Rabochee Delo*, along with a whole number of purely local splinter groups, would not have to dissolve themselves and join these official structures in order for their members

71 These are reproduced in translation in: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 76–7, 127.

72 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 493 (paragraph 7).

to remain part of the RSDLP. The Martovites also passed a modification which relaxed the relationship between the two leading bodies of the Party, the Editorial Board of the Party newspaper, *Iskra*, which was based abroad, and the Central Committee, which was mainly based in Russia. Once again, this was aimed at strengthening the hand of the non-*Iskra* groups in so far as Martov hoped to elect representatives from these quarters to the Central Committee, which would also acquire an unlimited right to co-opt further members. This implicitly gave hope to the non-*Iskra* groups that additional representatives from among them would find their way onto the Central Committee in the post-Congress period.

The basic issue dividing Lenin and Martov at the Second RSDLP Congress was therefore the question of whether the Central Committee should be made up exclusively of leading members of the *Iskra* factional apparatus, or whether it should incorporate broader Party forces. In concrete terms, this could be reduced to the matter of Lenin wishing to elect the leading 'bureau' of the Russian *Iskra* organisation,<sup>73</sup> the network of full-time 'agents' and their numerous volunteer assistants charged with distributing the paper around Russia and of winning influence for its politics among local RSDLP organisations, to the Central Committee. This would have meant the election of two politically experienced but curiously passive individuals to the body, Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovskii (1872–1959) and Friedrich Wilhelmovich Lengnik (1873–1936), who had played no visible role either in *Iskra's* conquest of the RSDLP or in the preparation of the Second Congress and who did not even attend the Congress, along with the more energetic Vladimir Alexandrovich Noskov (1878–1913).

Who Martov proposed as an alternative to this combination remains a matter of controversy, as it is alleged, though scarcely demonstrated, that a slate falsely attributed to Martov was at one point circulated.<sup>74</sup> Apart from that, he

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73 The 'Russian *Iskra* Organisation' is the name used in this volume to describe the network of supporters of the *Iskra* newspaper who helped distribute the publication around the local organisations of the RSDLP, whilst at the same time trying to win influence in these organisations and to gain admittance to their leading circles ('committees'). The organisation's overall aim was to secure financial and political support for the newspaper and the absorption of RSDLP bodies into itself. In this way, the ideological conquest of the RSDLP by *Iskra* was to be accompanied by the merging of numerous disparate local RSDLP organisations into a unified all-Russian Party apparatus which could prepare a Second RSDLP Congress in an effective manner and ensure the establishment of effective links between the leadership elected at this Congress and the local branches of the Party. See Chapter 11 of the collection and the commentary to it for further details.

74 See Chapter 16 for further details.

seems to have deliberately refrained from making counter-proposals in order to see how far the Lenin group could be forced into compromise. However, it is fairly clear that he supported the greater involvement of those forces who had played an active role in the 'Organising Committee' which had actually done much of the practical work that brought about the Second Congress.<sup>75</sup> On this committee, which contained representatives of all the main factional groupings in the Party, supporters of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* had played a particularly energetic role along with some individuals who, whilst formally being members of the *Iskra* organisation, had become disaffected with certain aspects of its political character, including an alleged tendency towards polemical dispute, and the excessive authority granted to an émigré leadership which was the Editorial Board of the paper in theory, but which was in reality a subgroup connected to it: Lenin and Krupskaya for the most part, and Martov intermittently.

The question may well be posed as to whether the preferences of the two sides regarding the Central Committee did not somehow express contrasting principles regarding Party organisation, in the sense that Lenin insisted on the importance of a monolithic leadership and Martov on a representative one as a matter of general policy. However, there is little evidence to support such a claim and, quite to the contrary, both slates appear to bear the character of fairly improvised responses to certain problems faced by the *Iskra* faction at the Congress itself, and there is no evidence of any conflict between Lenin and Martov on this issue in the pre-Congress period. One problem the *Iskra* faction appears to have encountered only at the Congress itself was the significant degree of resistance on the part of the anti-*Iskra* minority to following a Congress agenda which had been inevitably decided by the *Iskra* majority. This agenda, in which the latter seemed destined to triumph in every debate, gave them the right to reshape the broader Party in its own image, through decisions on programmatic, tactical and organisational questions. However, by arguing every point, using the techniques of filibuster, 'talking out' and other tactics favoured by determined parliamentary minorities, it seems that the Bund, pro-*Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and pro-*Rabochee Delo* delegates aimed at, and were quite successful in, securing the truncation of the original Congress agenda, a matter aided by the accidental factor of the Congress having to relocate to London from Brussels part of the way through its proceedings.<sup>76</sup>

75 A brief and useful summary of the work and decisions of this organisation is provided in: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 28–35.

76 The first 13 sessions of the Congress were held in Brussels from 30 July–6 August, n.s. According to Trotsky, the venue was the Belgian labour movement's *Maison du Peuple/Volkshuis*, specifically a storeroom owned by a labour co-operative with premises in the



As a result of this calculated disruption, many of the tactical questions slated for discussion, including the attitude of the Party to national-independence movements within the Russian Empire, demonstrations and uprisings, strikes and trade unions, terrorism and other Russian political parties were not even touched upon. Faced with this kind of pressure, which was effective as a means of reducing the degree to which *Iskra* could use its majority to reshape the RSDLP, it seems that a split in the latter's ranks emerged. Lenin began to favour a solution based around a homogeneous leadership, so that the inter-factional rivalry evident at the Congress would not be transferred into the leadership of the Party in the post-Congress period. By contrast, Martov tried to reach an understanding with some of the anti-*Iskra* opposition, especially the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group, in an attempt to calm an increasingly tense situation by means of compromise.

Of course, this divergent approach in itself scarcely implies the emergence of two incompatible political lines of a type that could lead to a split. However, as has already been noted, Martov's attempt at compromise was reinforced by subsequent opposition on his part to certain articles of the Party constitution Lenin presented to the Congress.<sup>77</sup> This opposition, whilst on the one hand serving the interests of the anti-*Iskra* opposition in a fairly concrete manner, at the same time claimed to oppose the excessive concentration of power at the summit of the Party apparatus and in this sense could be said to have given the dispute slightly more principled substance than its actual origins suggest.

The first key point of contention here concerned the definition of a Party member. Lenin's draft appears to describe a Party structure in which the membership was defined as those *participating* in the essentially illegal work of some official structure or other, in other words, one of the local committees or any one of its subordinate organs.<sup>78</sup> The latter included working groups dedicated to the printing, procuring and distribution of literature, the 'workers organisations' responsible for acquiring contacts and sympathising cells in

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building. After the police started taking an interest in the delegates, a new venue was sought in London. The first few London sessions took place in a room owned by the German Workers' Educational Association, also known as the Communist Club, located at 107 Charlotte Street, Fitzrovia. This organisation had in an earlier era hosted meetings of the Communist League, in which Marx and Engels had played a part. However, a third venue was soon sought, a church located in the East End whose identity has not been established.

77 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 511–12. This draft can usefully be compared with the final version: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 10–12.

78 '1. A Party member is one who accepts the Party's programme and supports the Party both financially and by personal participation in one of the Party organisations'.



various workplaces, the latter cells themselves and similar bodies among students, intellectuals, the armed forces and the like. In Lenin's view there could be no RSDLP member who was not involved in such collaborative and legally compromising work, and those that were unwilling to carry out clandestine activity were to be excluded from the Party, being reduced in status to sympathisers or 'fellow travellers'.

Martov's formula, by contrast, allowed those merely 'offering regular assistance' to the Party organisations to be counted as members. Taken at face value, this would have included a range of sympathisers called upon to carry out various specific tasks in the Party membership, such as members of the liberal professions allowing their premises to be used as a meeting place, or individuals agreeing to store or distribute literature on a regular basis but not attending meetings nor in any important sense 'conspiring' with others to undertake subversive political activity and, consequently, being in possession of next to no information as to the character of Party activity, their dealings with it being conducted through perhaps just one 'contact'.

The difference of opinion expressed here can seem to be of fairly negligible significance in terms of its capacity to affect the principles of Social-Democratic organisation. It can be said to be meaningless in the sense that Lenin clearly never intended to get rid of 'assistants' to the Party, though it seems that he supported organising them wherever possible into official Party work groups, with the effect that the number of those carrying out clandestine activity on an individual basis was reduced to a minimum. Apart from that, the tighter or looser definition of a Party member is of little significance considering the relative lack of rights the membership actually enjoyed. Ultimately, Lenin's draft included only one clear right, that of addressing correspondence directly to the Central Committee, but this right was in any case extended to those working closely with the Party without being members of it.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps one further small difference is that Lenin's version probably offers a more sober estimate of the Party's reliable forces, but such a truly minor advantage could scarcely generate extended controversy. Still less could it serve as the justification for a split and the historian is therefore tempted to conclude that Martov's amendment to paragraph one served not so much a principled purpose as the purpose of coming to a concrete understanding with the anti-*Iskra* minority at the Second Congress.

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79 '9. Any Party member and any person having dealings with the Party is entitled to demand that any statement made by him be transmitted in the original to the Central Committee, the Central Organ (the central Party newspaper) or the Party Congress'.

Indeed, this approach to the debate on 'paragraph one' leads to the intriguing idea that it served as mainly as a loophole through which the anti-*Iskra* factions could avoid submitting to the decisions of an *Iskra*-dominated Party leadership. This is because, at a later stage in the Congress, the anti-*Iskra* groups would be asked to dissolve their separate structures, such as the Union Abroad, the St. Petersburg Workers' Organisation and numerous splinter organisations operating in the localities, and to merge them with the *Iskra*-dominated official structures of the RSDLP. This meant that the 'Economist'-dominated Union Abroad would merge with the pro-*Iskra* League Abroad, the St. Petersburg Workers' Organisation would merge with the St. Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP, the local splinter groups with local RSDLP committees and so forth.<sup>80</sup> Should they refuse to do this, fearing that *Iskra's* dominant position would prevent their own views from being heard, Lenin's formula would have placed them outside the RSDLP on the grounds that they would not be 'participating' in an official RSDLP body. By contrast, Martov's formula would have given the green light to these groups to refuse to merge and to maintain their independent structures whilst remaining part of the RSDLP. This would be regardless of the decision of the Second Congress concerning their fate, on the grounds that the membership of the Party was not identical with those who participated in the work of official, Central Committee-sanctioned bodies. They simply had to 'assist' these official bodies in a reasonably co-operative manner in order to avoid the harsh alternative of either dissolving their factional apparatuses and working in the Party's official structures or being expelled from the RSDLP.

Further modifications proposed by Martov to the Lenin draft concerned the Party's leading bodies between Congresses. These included the Central Committee, which was responsible for directing the Party's apparatus, the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, which was responsible for the ideological guidance of the Party, and the Party Council, which was responsible for co-ordinating the work of the other two bodies and which was made up of representatives of each. In the debates on the relations between these bodies, Martov and his followers pursued amendments that would reduce the power granted to the *Iskra* Editorial Board in Lenin's original draft relative to that of the Central Committee. This draft had stipulated that the Congress would elect 'two trios', three people to the Editorial Board and three to the Central Committee, who would meet together and expand their membership on the basis of unanimous voting, the result being a politically homogeneous theoretical and practical leadership to the Party. This homogeneity would be further secured through the election of two representatives from each body, who together with a fifth

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80 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 399–418.

member elected by Congress would comprise the Party Council, a co-ordinating body which would meet only in case of problems. One key function this Council enjoyed appears to have been the right to replenish either the Central Committee or the Editorial Board should one or the other be put out of action by arrests.

Martov tried to modify these arrangements, arguing that the Central Committee, owing to the fact that a significant proportion of its membership would be active inside Russia and would therefore be far more likely to suffer depletion through arrest than the Editorial Board, a situation which would lead to the émigré Editorial Board constantly appointing members to the Central Committee through the Council rather than allowing the Central Committee to do this by independently co-opting individuals it considered most suitable. The measures Martov believed would reduce this excessive influence therefore included an increase in the right of either branch of the leadership to co-opt new members with minimal interference on the part of the other, and allowing the four basic members of the 'Party Council' to choose the fifth, rather than allowing it to be elected directly by Congress, a demand whose significance is at first sight far from obvious.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, these quibbles over the central Party institutions, as with the debate around the definition of a Party member, can seem to have little relevance to the broader question around centralism and democracy in the Social-Democratic Party and, just as with the modification of paragraph one, their main motivation can appear to be an attempt to appease the anti-*Iskra* elements at the Congress on the part of Martov. His attempted amendment regarding the Central Committee's right to co-opt was clearly intended to serve the interests of the anti-*Iskra* factions in so far as it looked likely, on the basis of the vote of the first paragraph, that a Central Committee dominated by Martov's supporters would be elected by the Congress. One avenue that may therefore have been pursued was the offer to certain anti-*Iskra* individuals of places on the Central Committee after the Congress had finished in return for electoral support, the reasoning being that to introduce them into the slate at the Congress itself would have provoked another round of controversy and delays.

Similarly, the proposal that the four Council members from the two basic leading bodies should elect the fifth appears to have been based on the entirely concrete calculation that, whilst the *Iskra* Editorial Board would inevitably send Martov and Lenin to the Council as the editors most experienced in organisational matters, the Central Committee would send 'Martovites', thus outvoting Lenin in the selection of a fifth member, leaving them in control of

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81 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 343–54, 361–7.

the body. Thus, once again, it can seem that there is no real question of 'organisational principle' in the debates between Lenin and Martov at the Second Congress, and it is therefore possible to sympathise with Lenin's complaints regarding Martov's alleged 'opportunism'. Rather than trying to define a Party constitution that would serve the RSDLP well in all conceivable circumstances, Martov appears to have subordinated questions to those of achieving a degree of peace at the Congress, a stance which his defenders would doubtless view as pragmatic and far more capable of serving the interests of the Party than the 'principled' approach of Lenin.

Nonetheless, the complaint raised in the discussion of relations between the Editorial Board and the Central Committee – specifically the alleged 'dominance' of the former over the latter – reappears fairly consistently in anti-Lenin *Iskra*-ite thought during the periods immediately prior to and after the Second Congress. The criticism was probably first made by certain pro-*Iskra* members of the Organising Committee who acted in alliance with the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representatives in opposing the *Iskra* newspaper's polemical exchange with the Bund in early 1903.<sup>82</sup> This was on the grounds that the argument was undermining the work of the Organising Committee, on which a Bund representative also sat. A resolution demanding an end to the exchanges was passed at the end of March and was adhered to, some time after which a pro-*Iskra* member of the Committee, Ekaterina Mikhailovna Alexandrova (1864–1943), sent a letter to Lenin and Martov.<sup>83</sup> In this letter, she described a preference for the Editorial Board of the Party newspaper being fused with the Central Committee, so that Congress would undertake to elect four people who would be jointly responsible for both the theoretical and the practical leadership of the Party.<sup>84</sup> In this way, the future emergence of public disagreements between the journalistic and practical leadership of the RSDLP would be prevented.

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82 The Bund's contribution to this argument forms Chapter 15 of the collection. See also Lenin, 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 317–23 and 328–34.

83 This letter is in Chapter 15 of the present collection.

84 One more reason she had for supporting this arrangement appears to have been her scathing attitude towards the Russian *Iskra* organisation, whose members her letter portrays as either inactive, prone to factional aggression or politically inexperienced. This attitude contrasts with her qualified support for the *Iskra* newspaper, regardless of its occasional polemical excesses. Given her remarks about the Russian *Iskra* organisation, it is tempting to guess that the four candidates she had in mind for the proposed 'single centre' Central Committee included Lenin and Martov as representatives of *Iskra*, along with two of the 'softer' but more active elements on the Organising Committee such as herself and either of the two *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representatives.

Alexandrova's proposed model for the Party leadership was not received with much sympathy, possibly because it was viewed as impractical.<sup>85</sup> The predominant view among the *Iskra* supporters was that the Editorial Board of the newspaper should be located in the emigration so as to prevent raids of the type that had destroyed *Rabochaia Gazeta*, whereas a separate practical leadership was required on Russian soil which could establish and maintain personal contact with the local organisations. However, Alexandrova's criticisms, which in her letter are expressed using quite sharp language, do appear to have gained credence among a section of the nominally pro-*Iskra* delegates at the Second RSDLP Congress. Specifically, opposition to the idea that an émigré literary leadership could direct the apparatus of a Party such as the RSDLP from abroad through a network such as the Russian *Iskra* organisation appears to have gained ground. This was a particularly pointed criticism in so far as, first of all, it was not the *Iskra* Editorial Board so much as Lenin and Krupskaya, along with a small group in Berlin, who were carrying out almost the whole of the correspondence with the leading *Iskra* activists in Russia, without the knowledge of the rest of the *Iskra* Editorial Board.<sup>86</sup> As such, any criticism of Russian *Iskra*, especially when connected to the charge of émigré meddling in the affairs of the RSDLP, could therefore be traced directly to Lenin, and not to the other editors of *Iskra*. Apart from that, Alexandrova's observations regarding *Iskra* prioritising the interests of its faction over those of the RSDLP as a whole were evidently a fair reflection of Lenin's consciously-chosen priorities in the immediate pre-Congress period in the sense that he, using not a little cunning, encouraged *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* to focus its efforts on preparations for the Congress, precisely in order to free up the *Iskra* faction's own forces for the more profitable enterprise of securing the support of the local RSDLP organisations granted delegations at the Congress itself.<sup>87</sup>

Alexandrova evidently did not appreciate Lenin's thinking in relation to the Organising Committee, in so far as for her, the re-establishment of the leading bodies of the RSDLP, including the Organising Committee and the Congress, took priority. This in itself did not place her at odds with Lenin, with whom the very idea of an Organising Committee and a fairly lengthy process of consulting the local RSDLP organisations in a pre-Congress period appears to have

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85 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 351–2.

86 See Smidovich 1904, pp. 28–35; Piatnitskii 1933, pp. 51–75; Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, pp. 288–9.

87 This strategy is discussed in greater detail in the commentary to Chapter 11 and the commentary to Chapter 16.

originated.<sup>88</sup> However, his support for the efforts of the Organising Committee and the Congress it produced was always dependent on the possibility of *Iskra* dominating both.<sup>89</sup> Thus, during the spring and summer of 1902, several months after the idea of forming an Organising Committee had been accepted, work on the Organising Committee was delayed until *Iskra*'s factional dominance was secured in St. Petersburg, the city with probably the most influence over Russian Social Democracy at the time. With the St. Petersburg Committee conquered in June,<sup>90</sup> he then attempted to create a pure-*Iskra* initiating body which would set about drawing together suitable elements from other factions and regional organisations – the Bund, the southern group around *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and possibly the Polish Social Democrats – to form the type of cross-factional Organising Committee agreed at a Party conference the previous March, in response to a proposal drafted by Lenin.<sup>91</sup>

This plan failed in so far as numerous members of this group were arrested following the first meeting of the Organising Committee in Pskov in October 1902. However, this did not ultimately turn out to be such a setback in so far as the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group, having previously indicated greater sympathy towards the Bund and *Rabochee Delo*, had by this stage declared its allegiance to *Iskra*.<sup>92</sup> The arrests left *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* as the dominant grouping in the Organising Committee and it seems that Lenin became reconciled to this state of affairs as one tolerable enough from the point of view of the *Iskra* faction. However, these thoughts were evidently not communicated to Alexandrova, who was, not insignificantly, sent into Russia to work on the Organising Committee by Martov rather than Lenin.<sup>93</sup> Her subsequent discovery of a less-than-urgent attitude towards the Organising Committee by the Russian *Iskra*, which was in fact a conscious ploy, thus laid the basis for a critical attitude towards it that was not entirely justified.

Nonetheless, her experience appears to have taught her that *Iskra* was rather better at arguing than organising, a criticism which disregards the

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88 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 95–102.

89 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 36, pp. 112–14.

90 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 176–85. At around this time, the Moscow Committee also declared its support for *Iskra* along with the 'Northern Union', an organisation uniting Social Democrats from a number of small towns in Vladimir, Kostroma and Yaroslavl gubernias. See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6 pp. 159–69 and pp. 206–8.

91 Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 8, pp. 272–4; Krupskaya 1930, p. 81.

92 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 225–8. A rather formulaic declaration of agreement with the principles, tactics and organisational views of *Iskra* appeared in *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* No. 10, p. 18.

93 See the documents which make up Chapter 12 of the present collection.

growing list of local RSDLP organisations declaring their support for the newspaper and, apparently, nominating its supporters as their delegates to the Congress.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, unlike Lenin, she either could not or did not wish to reconcile a firmly oppositional attitude towards a particular political group in questions of theory or principle with ongoing practical collaboration, a key feature of Lenin's thinking during the entire *Iskra* period. Just as, according to Lenin, the proletariat could potentially collaborate with the bourgeois class in the struggle for democracy whilst fighting it on economic issues, the *Iskra* faction, apparently, could collaborate with the Bund, 'Economist' and other factional enemies in constructing a pluralistic, multi-tendency Social-Democratic Party in Russia, whilst simultaneously fighting hard against these opponents to ensure the strongest possible position in relation to them of the *Iskra* faction. For Alexandrova, perhaps like Plekhanov in an earlier period, this was not possible and amounted to a self-contradictory policy.

Consequently, she only saw destructive behaviour in *Iskra*'s factional conflict with the Bund, ignoring the serious issues at stake. These included the question of whether ethnically specific Social-Democratic parties were in general terms compatible with the internationalist claims of Marxism; whether the creation of such parties would not be divisive, tending towards the promotion of interracial mistrust in the Social-Democratic and labour movement; and whether the creation of them would not be reactionary, given that a significant number of Jews, including those whose families had been exiled to the Pale of Settlement, nonetheless played a role in the 'integrated' Russian, as opposed to the specifically Jewish, Social-Democratic movement.

Thus, behind Alexandrova's aim of reducing the independent influence of the Editorial Board, we find some slightly more substantial political differences. These express a rather more compromising variant of Marxism in the realm of tactics and a less rigorous attachment to fairly significant points of principle. Unfortunately for the Russian Social Democracy as a whole, the tendency towards tolerance in inter-factional relations, which is undoubtedly the stronger side of Alexandrova's position, was evidently lost in the period

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94 Resolutions supporting *Iskra* from the local committees of the RSDLP can be found in the following issues of the newspaper: *Iskra* No. 26, p. 7 (St. Petersburg, Moscow); *Iskra* No. 28, p. 8 (Kharkov); *Iskra* No. 30, p. 8 (Nizhnii-Novgorod); *Iskra* No. 31, p. 8 (Saratov, Odessa); *Iskra* No. 34, p. 6 (Northern Union), *Iskra* No. 35, p. 8 (Don Committee, Siberian Union, Kazan, Ufa); *Iskra* No. 37, p. 8 (Tula, Irkutsk, Odessa). According to Lenin, *Iskra* could count on 33 out of 51 votes at the Second RSDLP Congress, each organisation being granted two votes with the exception of the Bund, who had three (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 19).



following the Second Congress. All that seems to have remained by this time was the essentially dogmatic objection to 'the tyranny of the Editorial Board over the Central Committee', which both amplified and distorted the character of the original criticism.

As for the decision of Congress concerning the relations between the different leading bodies, matters were complicated by the fact that a delegate from *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* actually submitted a model very similar to that described by Alexandrova in her letter and would not support Martov's own preferences. The result was a tortuous debate both in a commission set aside to discuss the issue and in the Congress hall itself, which ended in compromise.<sup>95</sup> The issue of the fifth member of the Party Council was decided firmly in Lenin's favour, Congress perhaps unsurprisingly deciding that this member was to be elected by Congress. The immediate result of this was that all delegates expected Plekhanov, at this point an ally of Lenin, to be elected to the position, the result being a Leninist majority on the body. Martov was only slightly more successful in relation to the issue of co-option, with the effect that the final rule stated that both the Editorial Board and the Central Committee could co-opt on their own initiative, provided there was a unanimous vote. Given that all but the least credible of the slates the Martovites had thus far proposed had contained at least one supporter of Lenin, the possibility of this rule serving any factional purpose was actually minimal, and thus Martov's original hopes of a predominant position in the Party leadership came to look increasingly doubtful. Matters only took a turn for the worse with the departure of the Bund and the Union Abroad delegates, with the effect that the Martovites could not reasonably expect to capture either of the leading bodies. As a result, at this point in the Congress, gloomy protests by Martov regarding the emergence of a 'state of siege' in the Party began to be heard, complaints which were to be rehearsed consistently for many months following the Congress, but which cannot be said to have been raised prior to his defeat on the question of the relations between the Party's leading bodies.<sup>96</sup>

The precise meaning of the term 'state of siege' was never articulated with any great clarity and it evidently served as something of a rhetorical device. However, from the context, it seems reasonable to surmise that Martov was referring at least in part to Lenin's version of paragraph one of the rules which, once it becomes clear that he could not win the elections, he began to

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95 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 343–54.

96 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 432. See also Chapter 17 and Chapter 18 of the present collection.



denounce as an 'exceptional law against particular groups'.<sup>97</sup> Behind the flamboyant language, there appears to be opposition to the process of reorganising the local RSDLP branches and obliging splinter groups to merge their forces with the official ones, the latter being defined by either Congress or the Central Committee, the result being the handing over of independent publications, funds and other resources to these official groups. This was probably viewed as authoritarian and as a violation of the rights of the minority groups, most of whom were not represented at the Congress owing to their insufficient solidity or activity in accordance with rules drafted by the Organising Committee.

Somewhat eccentrically, Martov then seems to have combined this argument with the concern raised by members of this same Organising Committee, such as Alexandrova, concerning the excessive and damaging organisational influence of the *Iskra* Editorial Board on the RSDLP inside Russia. Thus he concludes that it is the Editorial Board and not the Central Committee in the new RSDLP structure that will direct the 'fusion' of the splinter groups with the official apparatus in the new organisational regime, the latter serving as a mere 'tool' of the former. This position can be considered strange not only because there is little evidence from the RSDLP constitution that such an arrangement would be possible and because from the perspective of the groups faced with being 'merged' it would presumably be a matter of indifference precisely which body ordered the merger. Apart from that, only in a particular set of concrete circumstances, namely one in which the Central Committee and the newspaper's Editorial Board expressed different political tendencies and actually disagreed with one another, could protests about the dominance of the latter over the former be said to make much sense. Yet this could only really occur as a result of fairly unusual electoral circumstances in which the one Congress elected two leading bodies of contrasting political composition. This did not of course happen at the Second Congress, at which only Leninists were elected to both the Editorial Board and the Central Committee, leaving Martov in the somewhat absurd position of protesting on behalf of the latter even though no protest was ever likely to come from this body itself.

Despite the evident weakness of his arguments, it seems clear that Martov's unique understanding of the relations between the Editorial Board and the Central Committee dictated his faction's early organisational manoeuvres against the Leninists, and these arguments can serve to explain the behaviour on the part of the Martovites, which can at first sight seem incoherent. For example, in the elections to the Party's leading bodies at the end of the Second Congress of the RSDLP, the Martovites put forward a slate of six for

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97 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 432.

the Editorial Board, one very closely modelled on the Editorial Board of *Iskra* in the pre-Congress period and which, most importantly, included a majority from their own faction. Given the perceived iniquity of the Editorial Board's position in the new rules, the decision to put forward a slate can in itself seem surprising, but it makes sense if it is accepted that only a board in which a 'moderate' grouping dominated could exercise the necessary restraint that would prevent the 'state of siege' from becoming a reality. If it was within the power of the Editorial Board to direct the actions of the Central Committee in its reorganisation of the local branches, an editorial board made up of his own supporters would indeed have prevented the Leninists from wielding the supposedly excessive power they themselves had granted to this body. Against this, it must of course be acknowledged that this policy of capturing a powerful body 'to prevent the abuse of its power' can be seen as self-serving and not a little self-aggrandising: there is no guarantee whatsoever that the Martovites would abuse this power any less than the Leninists.

Similarly, having lost the elections to the all-important Editorial Board, Martov and his supporters refused to participate in the elections to the Central Committee, a decision which seems inconsistent, given their previous submission of a slate for the Editorial Board. However, this decision was not without reason, if their basic premises regarding the power relations between the Party's leading bodies are accepted. Given the supposed dominance of the Editorial Board over it and its complete lack of independence, it could be argued that it was impossible for any of their candidates to meaningfully fight for their views in the Central Committee, should they be elected to it. From this point of view, the elections to the Central Committee would be viewed as a sham, the real power over the body lying not in Congress but in the Editorial Board who, if consistency were to be observed in Party-constitutional arrangements, should have been granted the responsibility of appointing the Central Committee. This is because, in Martov's admittedly baseless view, the Central Committee was an unthinking executive organ bound to obey and carry out the decisions of a higher body, and its Martovite members would therefore be required to act against their consciences, should they accept positions on it. It seems that Martov refused to serve on the Editorial Board, to which he had been elected by the Leninist majority, owing to similar considerations: he believed that he would be consistently outvoted by Plekhanov and Lenin and would therefore be compelled to implement the 'state of siege', owing to obligations of discipline and in violation of his own preferences.

Thus, having failed to obtain a majority in the Editorial Board, the new plan for the Martovites was complete dissociation from the Party's three leading bodies as a whole, on the grounds that they would inevitably pursue

'state-of-siege' policies directed by the Leninist Editorial Board. In the immediate post-Congress period, this 'abstentionist' attitude matured into a broad-ranging boycott of the leading Party institutions – a refusal to co-operate with them or obey their instructions – and the creation of a 'Menshevik' factional apparatus to agitate for a similar boycott on the part of the local committees. The stated aim of this campaign was to secure a change in the personal composition of these institutions that would return predominance in the crucial Editorial Board to the supporters of Martov.<sup>98</sup> Having achieved this goal and thus 'liberated' the Central Committee from its imagined yoke, it would once again be permissible for Martov's supporters to serve on the Central Committee and the Council, which was of course perceived as the mechanism through which the Editorial Board would dictate its will to the Central Committee.

The consequences of the Martovites' decision to fight the Party's elected leadership could be summarised in the following manner. The discovery that their opponents had held a meeting at which they had declared their readiness to take the dispute into Russia, and to seek the support of local RSDLP organisations, appears to have hardened the attitude of the Lenin camp. By the end of September 1903 there was evidently less willingness on the part of Lenin in particular to consider the various formulae proposed by representatives of the Martov group for a settlement of the issue of places in the leading bodies. The latter appear to have responded to these rejections with a successful attempt to call a Second Congress of the League Abroad, the pro-*Iskra* émigré organisation which had been made the RSDLP's official body for émigrés at the Party's Second Congress. This provided an opportunity for rehearsing the arguments made at the Party Congress in a body in which the Martov group had a small majority, and in this way it acted as a means of putting pressure on the Party leadership. Indeed, Plekhanov broke with Lenin when faced with the predictably charged atmosphere of the meeting, announcing to the latter his willingness to co-opt Martov and to have the three editors removed from the Editorial Board of *Iskra* at the Second RSDLP Congress reinstated. Isolated, Lenin had little option but to accept this proposal, and seemingly in the belief that it would put an end to the matter, he offered to resign from the Editorial Board and the Party Council, safe in the knowledge that his supporters would immediately co-opt him onto the Central Committee, where the real executive power in the Party lay.

This attempt at a settlement failed as Plekhanov subsequently made it clear that, following Lenin's resignation from the Party Council, the Editorial Board's

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98 See Chapter 17 of the present collection.

other representative – Lev Halperin,<sup>99</sup> who was not himself an editor, but an ordinary supporter of Lenin – should also resign, to allow the new ‘Martovite’ Editorial Board to choose its own representatives. This was significant, as Halperin’s continued presence in the Council guaranteed that the institution would have a majority in favour of Lenin,<sup>100</sup> whereas Plekhanov’s proposal would create an evenly balanced Council with two Lenin supporters and two Martov supporters, Plekhanov himself holding the balance of power not only in the Council, but in the Party leadership as a whole. Halperin was eventually persuaded to resign, and over the next few months Plekhanov began to show an increasing antipathy towards Lenin, in this way guaranteeing the effective supremacy of Martov’s point of view. Thus, Lenin’s request that a Third RSDLP Congress be convened to resolve the issue of the leadership was refused at the first meeting of the Council in January 1904 and Lenin, who attended the meeting as a representative of the Central Committee, was instead pressed to co-opt Martov supporters onto the Central Committee by the Council majority, despite the fact that the Editorial Board was now ‘Martovite’ for all practical purposes.<sup>101</sup> This counter-proposal was refused, in part because the Party rules only allowed the Council to intervene where either the Central Committee or the Editorial Board could not achieve unanimity as a body regarding the co-option of new members and even then it could only play an advisory role.<sup>102</sup>

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99 Lev Efimovich Halperin (1872–1951) helped organise *Iskra’s* Baku printshop and was subsequently co-opted onto the Central Committee, where he eventually became a conciliator, opposing Lenin’s campaign for a Third RSDLP Congress as a means of resolving the dispute with the supporters of Martov. During the First World War he supported the Menshevik Internationalist but he did not support the group’s fusion with the Bolsheviks in the summer of 1917 and therefore did not rejoin the latter. He was executed in 1951, though the nature of the accusations against him are unclear.

100 This is based on the assumption that the Central Committee would send two Lenin supporters to the Council who, along with Halperin, would be able to outvote Plekhanov and the second representative of the Editorial Board.

101 Though in the immediate post-Congress period the group around Martov also declared that a new Party Congress was necessary to resolve the disputes taking place within the RSDLP leadership, this demand was dropped once Lenin resigned from the Editorial Board and Martov, Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov were co-opted onto it. From this point on, it was the group around Lenin who most persistently called for a Congress, though a section of Lenin’s supporters, the so-called ‘conciliators’, did not support this idea. Compare Chapter 17 of the present collection with: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 143–85.

102 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 12. ‘12. . . co-option of new members to the Central Committee and to the Editorial Board of the Central Organ requires a unanimous vote. In cases where co-option to the Central Committee or to the Editorial Board of the Central Organ is not unanimously approved, the question may be referred to the

Whilst it is likely that by this stage the unanimity of the Central Committee regarding further concessions had been breached, it seems that the Council was still not in a position to impose its preferences on the Central Committee and was in fact limited to the use of persuasion by the Party constitution.

For a whole period, the stalemate within the Party leadership remained, with both sides seeking support among the local organisations in Russia and issuing pamphlets explaining their point of view. However, during this period, a section of the Central Committee, which had been expanded from its original trio by means of co-option, began to become weary of the disruptive effects on Party work in Russia of what they viewed as an émigré dispute. Consequently, they began to oppose Lenin's repeated appeals for a Third RSDLP Congress, and a struggle within the Central Committee broke out in the summer of 1904, following the second meeting of the Council and the appearance of the pamphlet, *One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back*.<sup>103</sup> The final result of this struggle was the resolution by a majority of the Central Committee against any campaign for a new Congress and a request that Lenin resign from his position on the Central Committee and rejoin the Editorial Board.

Lenin refused this request, and instead he began marshalling support inside Russia for a new Party Congress, the intention being to bypass the Party leadership and oblige it to convene such an assembly, as the Party constitution stipulated that one could be called where a majority of Party organisations demanded it.<sup>104</sup> The first step in this campaign took the form of a meeting of his supporters in Switzerland in August 1904, at which it might reasonably be said that the 'Bolshevik' faction was founded, after which plans were made to draw all the local organisations supporting the demand for a new Party Congress into a common factional organisation. In December, this faction launched its own newspaper, *Vpered*, Lenin and his supporters having for a long time criticised the content of *Iskra* for its vacillation on questions of political principle and its inappropriate polemical content. Meanwhile, the Central Committee co-opted the key Martov supporters Rozanov, Krokmal and Alexandrova, and

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Party Council, and, in the event of cassation by the Council of the decision taken by the body concerned, is to be finally decided by simple majority vote'.

103 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 201–423. This pamphlet dealt with the main conflicts between the 'Leninists' and the 'Martovites' during the Second RSDLP Congress and during the months following it.

104 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 10. '2. The supreme organ of the Party is the Party Congress. It is convened (if possible not less often than once every two years) by the Party Council. The Party Council must call a Congress if this is demanded by Party organisations which together would command half the votes at the Congress...'

initiated disciplinary proceedings against the leading members of the Lenin faction. The Central Committee formally resolved to remove Lenin from his position in the body in February 1905, but it seems that the decision was never published or acted on owing to a police raid on the meeting.

In February 1905, the Lenin faction in Russia publicly announced the formation of an Organising Committee, which prepared a Congress to which both pro-Lenin and pro-Martov organisations were invited. In the event, the Congress took place in April 1905 in London, but owing to a further boycott by the Mensheviks and the leading Party bodies they controlled, the controversy was scarcely resolved.<sup>105</sup> On the contrary, new, far more important issues dividing the two camps had emerged by this stage, issues relating to the revolutionary events of 1905. These included: the attitude of the Social Democrats to the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie, the advisability of an armed uprising and the legitimacy of Social-Democratic participation in any revolutionary provisional government that might emerge following the overthrow of the autocracy.

As regards the Party constitution, the 'Bolshevik' Third Congress made numerous changes to the arrangements agreed at the Second Congress, most notably getting rid of the whole arrangement whereby the Party was led by three separate institutions, an arrangement which seemed to have given so many opportunities for factionalism to flourish. In place of this, the formula first defended by Alexandrova and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* was adopted, namely one in which the Central Committee in Russia appointed the newspaper's Editorial Board.<sup>106</sup> Lenin's preferred formula defining a Party member was adopted, but at the same time, local organisations were guaranteed 'autonomy' from the Central Committee and guarantees were introduced limiting the right of the Central Committee in relation to the local committees, so as to prevent the former replacing the personnel of the latter with its own preferred candidates.

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105 Almost at the same time as the Third RSDLP Congress, the 'Mensheviks' held a rival conference, where an entirely new constitution was approved along with tactical resolutions expressing opposition to plans for an armed uprising or participation in a multi-Party provisional government, whilst expressing fairly unqualified support for movements among the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie. Details concerning its proceedings remain somewhat sketchy, and are mainly determined from articles and pamphlets by Lenin criticising its conclusions, such as his well-known *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 9, pp. 15–140).

106 Though he adhered to this decision, Lenin was evidently opposed to its content: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 8, pp. 197–9 and Vol. 8, p. 437 and pp. 444–6.

## Programme of *Rabochee Delo*

*Rabochee Delo* was founded in April 1899 following an ideological and organisational conflict within the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad between the supporters and the opponents of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, who had for a long time exerted significant influence over the Russian Social-Democratic emigration, and the Russian Social-Democratic movement as a whole.

Various short lived organisations claiming the title 'Union of Russian Social Democrats' existed during the 1880s and early 90s, which connected a number of illegal reading circles inside Russia with the émigré 'Emancipation of Labour' group on a loose federal basis. The Plekhanov group provided its sympathisers in Russia with learned and theoretical literature,<sup>1</sup> and the latter on at least one occasion attempted to produce an agitational newspaper directed towards a broader working-class audience.<sup>2</sup> The latest of several attempts to re-establish this 'Union' had been undertaken by Lenin and two colleagues in 1895, as a result of which the 'Emancipation of Labour' group started to produce the journal *Rabotnik*,<sup>3</sup> whilst the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class' worked on a newspaper also entitled *Rabochee Delo*, but which had no other connection to the later theoretical journal.<sup>4</sup> This attempt to produce a Social-Democratic newspaper on Russian soil failed, as had all previous efforts, and as a result the 'Emancipation of Labour' group started to produce its own newspaper-like supplement to

1 These included: the 'literary-political miscellany' *Sotsial-Demokrat*, four issues of which appeared from 1888–92; numerous pamphlets by Plekhanov such as *Socialism and Political Struggle* (1883) and *Our Disagreements* (1885) and *The Tasks of Socialists in the Fight Against Famine in Russia* (1892); a series of translations into Russian of works by Marx and Engels published as part of the series 'Library of Contemporary Socialism'; the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group* (1884) and the *Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democratic Union* (1887) (See Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 44–107; Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 2, pp. 21–405 and Vol. 3, pp. 11–45 and pp. 214–421; Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 49–368).

2 *Rabochii* (1885) was to have been the newspaper of the St. Petersburg circle organised by Dimitar Blagoev (1856–1924).

3 Three 'double issues' (Nos. 1–2, Nos. 3–4, Nos. 5–6) of *Rabotnik* were published by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group between 1896–9, the first two in the name of the Union of Russian Social Democrats, the last one in the name of the RSDLP.

4 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 87–92 and pp. 543–4; Vol. 5, p. 376.



Rabotnik, *Listok Rabotnika*<sup>5</sup> in Geneva. These publications were printed and smuggled into Russia with a group of émigré sympathisers who around this time started to style themselves the 'Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad', a definite organisation designed to furnish the various 'Unions of Struggle' (in St. Petersburg, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav and Moscow) with both theoretical and agitational Social-Democratic literature, whilst offering these organisations several forms of practical and organisational assistance: fund-raising, the reception of refugees and recruitment from the numerous Russian-student 'colonies' in Europe.

As with the earlier reading circles and the later, more activist 'Unions of Struggle', this 'Union Abroad' appears to have been organisationally distinct from the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. The former seems to have engaged solely in literary and publishing work, whilst the Union dealt with the above-mentioned practical matters. Nonetheless, the greater part of its active membership was sympathetic to 'Emancipation of Labour' group views. Consequently, the recognition by the First Congress of the RSDLP of the 'Union Abroad' as its official émigré section, without any reference to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, may have caused disquiet among the supporters of the latter, as they believed the Union's recognition had been earned as much in consequence of the efforts of the literary circle as the practical efforts of the Union itself. Whilst the formal incorporation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group into the Union Abroad partially dealt with this problem, this produced the expectation that any leading activists of the RSDLP who found themselves abroad should be admitted to the Union, and the democratic assumption that this new influx should have the right to influence 'Emancipation of Labour' group literature, a right which does not appear to have been exercised prior to the foundation of the RSDLP. Such developments were opposed by Plekhanov, who wanted to defend the intellectual independence and reputation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group at all costs, especially in relation to the supposedly 'Economist' views of the newer members of the Union, who soon became a majority in the organisation.

Nonetheless, the demands of the latter were satisfied through a Union Abroad Congress held in October 1898, an event which precipitated the surrendering by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group of its literary responsibilities and the liquidation of *Rabotnik* and *Listok Rabotnika*.<sup>6</sup> It seems that these resignations were viewed

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5 Ten issues of *Listok Rabotnika* were published by the Union of Russian Social Democrats from 1896–8. Issues 1–8 were edited by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the last two (a double issue following the First Congress of the Union in November 1898) by the grouping in the Union that went on to found *Rabochee Delo*.

6 One double issue of *Rabotnik* (5–6) is dated after this First Congress, though most of the work towards it had been done before the meeting, as did one 'double issue' (9–10) of *Listok*



by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group as a better alternative to allowing the 'Economist' majority to supervise the content of their literary work without playing a direct role in this work themselves, a scenario which would probably have been interpreted as a form of censorship imposed on their editorial work, albeit 'censorship from below'. Precisely such an arrangement appears to have been the preferred option of the newer members of the Union, mainly owing to their own lack of literary experience. Following the resignations, the Union Abroad majority assembled an Editorial Board based in Paris which was charged with producing a new journal, *Rabochee Delo*, the first issue of which appeared in April 1899.

This new board was made up of Boris Naumovich Krichevskii (1866–1919), Vladimir Petrovich Ivanshin (1869–1904) and Pavel Fedorovich Teplov (1867–1908), none of whom were well-known literary figures at the time. Several years previously, Krichevskii had attempted to publish unauthorised translations of works by Marx and Engels, only to be subject to an objection on the part of the latter, who had made an agreement with Vera Zasulich to produce author-approved versions.<sup>7</sup> At one point he had also been associated with Rosa Luxemburg in the Polish Social-Democratic Party. He also wrote for the central newspaper of the German Social Democracy, *Vorwärts*. Meanwhile, Ivanshin was involved in the 'Economist' newspaper *Rabochaia Mysl'*, which was nominally attached to the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle but was in reality being published abroad.<sup>8</sup> Details concerning Teplov are hard to come by, though he was evidently quite active in the leadership of the Union Abroad.

The Programme of *Rabochee Delo* was the first article in the first issue of the new journal and it also appeared as a separate pamphlet. It sets out the basic views and practical goals of the Editorial Board, giving the impression that *Rabochee Delo* was in no sense a journal dedicated to the labour movement alone, still less to 'economically' driven strike struggles over workplace terms and conditions, and that it was opposed at least in word to a broad range of social and political injustices. As such it does not at first sight appear to correspond to any simplistic definition of 'Economism' which portrays the phenomenon as one concerned exclusively with workplace matters.

At the same time, it scarcely represents an unambiguous statement of Marxist or socialist principles and, in contrast to the earlier programmatic statements of

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*Rabotnika*. The latter appeared under the editorial guidance of the 'Economists'. After this, both publications ceased to appear.

7 See Marx 1975–2005, Vol. 50, p. 307 and p. 316.

8 Sixteen issues of *Rabochaia Mysl'* were published from 1897–1902, but only the first two were actually published in St. Petersburg. See Lih 2006, pp. 240–6.

Marx,<sup>9</sup> Plekhanov and the German Social Democracy at Erfurt,<sup>10</sup> there is next to no analysis of the capitalist economic system and its most problematic features, nor of the nature of socialism and its capacity to solve these problems. Moreover, it is tactically committed to a 'gradualist' approach, arguing that workers cannot acquire sophisticated political ideas prior to lengthy experience of state brutality acquired in the course of campaigns for economic improvements: thus it can seem that the question of socialism and even democracy is postponed to some indefinite future in a manner perhaps not so distinct from the German revisionists.

## From the Editorial Board

In setting out to fulfil the hard and demanding duty of editing the publications of the Union of Russian Social Democrats,<sup>11</sup> the new Editorial Board, elected at the last Congress of the members of the Union,<sup>12</sup> considers it necessary to set out before comrades those fundamental opinions by which the Union and the Editorial Board will be guided in their literary activity.

The Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad acts on the basis of international socialism and in theoretical and practical agreement with the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, a section of which it constitutes. Its activity can be worthwhile only on the condition that it: firstly, is guided not only by the general principles of scientific socialism, but also by the concrete relations of the social classes in Russia and the daily requirements of the Russian labour movement at its current level of development; secondly, that it considers the

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9 Of particular interest in this connection is Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx 1975–2005, Vol. 24, pp. 75–99).

10 This was the programme approved at the 1891 Erfurt Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party. In this document there is an explicit call for the social ownership of the means of production – 'the land, the soil, pits and mines, raw materials, tools, machines and means of transportation' – alongside an indictment of private ownership of these as the cause of the 'misery, oppression, degradation and exploitation' of the working class.

11 That is, the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad. For reasons that are unclear, the suffix 'Abroad' was frequently dropped in its publications, regardless of whether these were edited by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group or the 'Economists'.

12 The First Congress of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, which took place in October 1898.

differing social conditions and levels of development obtaining in the separate layers of the working class.

The economic and political liberation of the working class in Russia, as in the rest of the world, can only be an affair of the workers themselves. Therefore we consider the most important feature of Russian life, which will in the main define the tasks and the character of the literary activity of the Union, to be the *mass workers' movement* which has sprung up in the last few years. A merging of the circle-propaganda current of the Social-Democratic worker-intelligentsia with the broad wave of the spontaneous movement of the working masses took place, which was directed towards the improvement of the latter's economic and legal situation and towards the satisfaction of their rapidly growing thirst for knowledge and enlightenment. In St. Petersburg, this merging occurred at the time of the broad strike movement of 1895–6 and the remarkable struggle of thirty thousand textile-factory workers in 1896–7 for the reduction of the working day, a struggle that was crowned with victory: the 'autocratic and unlimited' government had to make concessions to the workers and promulgate the law of 2 June on the regulation of working time. In other centres of Russian industry, this merging is taking place as we speak, and in Poland and Lithuania it was completed much earlier.

In the process of workers' struggle for those immediate interests of which they are conscious, the mass workers' movement in Russia is starting to take on a *class* character. The task of the Social-Democratic Party and its literature under such conditions consists in quickening the transition from a spontaneous mass movement to the struggle for the class interests of the whole proletariat (in contrast to a strike movement for the interests of a specific section of it), to the development of the Russian proletariat's class-consciousness and organisation. But under the ruling system in Russia in which the people are without rights, every step of the working class on the road to the improvement of its economic situation proves also to be a struggle with that system because it leads to a clash between workers and the organised force of the government, which defends the interests of the factory owners and the gentry. In Russia more than in any other country, the economic struggle of the working class is inseparable from the political struggle, and in relation to the Russian workers' movement, the propositions of scientific socialism stating that every class struggle is a political struggle and that the social liberation of the working class is impossible without its political emancipation are entirely true.

The vital interests of the working class lead it towards *political* struggle. The requirements of purely economic struggle compel the workers to put forward political demands and to fight for political freedom. The political struggle of the working class is only the most developed, broad and authentic form of

the economic struggle. The immediate political demands of the working class in Russia are: freedom of association, strikes, assembly, speech and publication, along with the inviolability of the individual. These political rights serve as the basic conditions of the further all-sided development of the workers' movement. They are therefore as necessary as light and air to the Russian proletariat in its liberation struggle. The struggle of the working class for these rights serves as the immediate content of its struggle with the tsarist autocracy, which will lead to the conquest of complete political freedom with the equal right of the whole people to participate in the governance of the state, that is, it will lead to the conquest of a democratic constitution.

One of the main tasks in the literary activity of the Union will be to explain the mutual relations, significance and form of the political struggle of the working class in Russia and in other countries, using the facts of Russian life and life abroad.

Specifically, in relation to the *economic struggle* we will point out how it 1) leads to the immediate partial improvement of the situation of individual layers of the working class; 2) permits the development of feelings of solidarity and class-consciousness among workers; 3) is a practical school of organised activity, enabling the establishment and growth of different forms of workers' organisation – fighting funds, trade unions and so forth. Finally, the practical means of conducting economic struggle and methods of organisation under current conditions will be discussed.

As for the discussion of the question of *the means of political struggle*, we will explain that economic struggle is the fundamental condition for the growth of a mass workers' movement and that it is at the same time a most powerful means for having a broad political effect on the masses, through political agitation in cases where 'ring-leader' socialists are persecuted, in cases of mass arrest, the exiling of workers, brutal reprisals against strikers and so on. But apart from the clashes of the working masses with governmental power on the basis of economic campaigns, all the important facts of Russian life touching on the interests of the broad mass of working people and showing the enmity towards them of the tsarist government can be occasions for political agitation and propaganda: famine, new laws, tendencies towards still greater oppression of the people or to the enrichment at their expense of the factory-owners, the gentry and so on. Finally, the Union's press takes an unconditionally sympathetic attitude towards attempts at political demonstrations and recommends the celebration of 1 May in particular as a general demonstration in support of the most important economic demands of the proletariat and as the most appropriate moment for the announcement of immediate political demands.

It goes without saying that the possibility, the means of, and occasion for having political influence on the masses, not to mention the form of the workers' political struggle, depends on local conditions, the strength of the workers' organisations and the level of understanding of the different strata of the working class.

In resolving the problems of political and economic struggle, we will be guided both by the conditions of Russian life and the rich historical experience of the workers' movement in Western Europe, and also by the experience of the struggle of our Polish and Jewish comrades who are successfully operating in Poland and Lithuania whilst being persecuted by the same tsarist despotism as ourselves.

Regarding the workers' economic and political struggle as two forms, as two inseparable means of one great liberation struggle of the working class in both Russia and other countries, we consider this struggle to be the only road to the final triumph of the international proletariat – to the complete economic and political liberation of working people and the introduction of a socialist system.

*In relation to the other revolutionary tendencies among Russian socialists*, the Union fully shares the idea expressed in the manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party that the contemporary Social-Democratic movement is only the most recent step in the development of the previous revolutionary movement in Russia, and that it therefore views the revolutionaries of the 1870s and the 1880s as its predecessors, who reflected the interests and requirements of that time in their programmes and who prepared the ground for the contemporary workers' movement with their heroic struggle. As regards other socialist currents existing at the present moment, the Union will critically evaluate their programmes and tactics from the Social-Democratic point of view in its press, strictly holding back from sharp, uncomradely methods of polemic and, bearing in mind the common enemy and shared goals of the struggle, will contribute to the *practical unification* of socialist forces active in Russia.

The Union will subject *the activity of the non-socialist revolutionary and political opposition* groups to criticism, explaining the contradiction between the interests of those sections of the population they represent and those of the working class, and the difference between the aims of these groups and the tasks of the Social-Democratic Party. At the same time, it will take a sympathetic attitude towards their attempts at active struggle for political freedom in so far as every enemy of the autocracy represents a *temporary* ally of the working class in its liberation-struggle.

As a Social-Democratic organisation, the Union is an enemy of all *national and religious* oppression: therefore the Editorial Board, in its literary activity,

will stand for freedom of religion and equal rights for all nationalities. Recognising the right to self-determination of all nations, the Union and the Editorial Board regard all the socialist organisations of the different nationalities operating on Russian soil with full comradely sympathy in so far as these organisations stand up for the interests of the working class and fight against the Russian autocracy.

The Union will promote in its literature the view that the Russian Social-Democratic Party should be a fighter for the interests and rights of *all* sections of the working class: factory and mill workers, railway workers, commercial, craft, handicraft and agricultural workers, and also the many millions of small farmers (without horses, without allotments, without homes, renting their allotments and so forth) the independent, proprietor-class status of which is pure fiction, and who earn their keep through hired labour in the form of day labour, seasonal work away from the village and *kabala* work,<sup>13</sup> carried out as a debt to land-owners, rural kulaks and so forth.

Recognising the great significance in Russia of the *agrarian question*, questions of land relations, the legal and economic situation of one hundred million rural dwellers, of the mutual relations between the peasants, the gentry and the agricultural workers, the Union will pay serious attention to these matters in its literature, explaining the influence of agricultural relations on the conditions of struggle and the situation of the working class in Russia.

Without predetermining the political role of the Russian peasantry in the future, the Editorial Board will explain the economic inequality and contradiction of interests existing in its midst, the different forms of exploitation on the part of the gentry and the kulaks of the rural poor (rent, usury, working to pay off debts and the like) and also the scandalous forms of legal inequality for the peasantry (the 'taxable estate', corporal punishment, land captains,<sup>14</sup> labour service for those in arrears, and so forth); it will pay serious attention to all manifestations of spontaneous discontent and conscious protest among the peasantry, especially to peasant uprisings and to the different forms of the

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13 A form of indentured servitude as a result of a debt, which dates from the Medieval period.

14 An official from a gentry background with a variety of dictatorial powers over the peasantry. Introduced in 1889 under Alexander III, their presence took away many of the rights won by peasants following the ending of serfdom in 1861: the right to elect their own magistrates at a neighbourhood level, to organise village meetings with decision-making powers and so forth. They could also order corporal punishment, as well as fine and gaol peasants.

sectarian movement as the most significant displays up to now of mental awakening and an oppositional mood in the mass of the peasantry.

Explaining the characteristics of the forms and conditions of labour, the different types of economic oppression and lawlessness peculiar to each of the sections of the exploited masses we have discussed, the Editorial Board will at the same time emphasise the *community of economic, legal and political interests of all the working people of Russia*. Only in the fight for the interests and rights of *all* working people against *all* forms of economic, political, national and religious oppression will the Russian Social Democracy fulfil its historic task: *the overthrow of the autocracy and the full economic and political liberation of the working class*.

Among the literary tasks of the Union, in first place stands the creation of a fighting Social-Democratic press organ which satisfies the requirements of the Russian workers' movement. Alongside the supplements to *Rabotnik* which have been published up to now,<sup>15</sup> the periodical *Rabochee Delo* will be published, appearing every two months if possible,<sup>16</sup> more or less in accordance with the following programme:

- 1) A leading article on general or current questions of socialism and the workers' movement.
- 2) An article on international relations from the point of view of the working class or a survey of the situation of a definite country in Western Europe or North America.
- 3) An article on the burning question of the day in Russian public and political life.
- 4) A Home Survey: correspondence and a survey of outstanding events in so far as these touch on the interests of the working masses.
- 5) A survey of our Russian labour movement on the basis of reports from comrades active in Russia; the correspondence, proclamations and appeals of Russian workers' organisations.
- 6) The workers' movement in Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic region and Finland; the Jewish workers' movement.

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<sup>15</sup> This 'supplement' was *Listok Rabotnika*.

<sup>16</sup> This schedule proved over-ambitious: in fact, 12 issues of *Rabochee Delo* (and eight of its 'supplement', *Listok Rabochego Dela*) appeared between April 1899 and February 1902. With the failure of the attempt at a Second RSDLP Congress which took place in March 1902 and in which the 'Economists' played a central role, both publications ceased to appear.



- 7) Correspondence and articles about the workers' movement of different Western-European countries.
- 8) Criticism and bibliography. Articles about, or reviews of, illegal Russian literature.
- 9) A chronicle of revolutionary struggle.
- 10) A historical and literary department (to the extent that material is provided).
- 11) Letters to the Editors: for queries and answers to Russian correspondents.
- 12) Accounts of the Union's administration and those of other organisations.

*Rabochee Delo* sets itself the goals of facilitating the working-out of Social-Democratic convictions among workers and their political development. The press organ of the Union mainly has in mind the satisfaction of the pressing demand for knowledgeable propagandists, agitators and organisers who are capable of independently evaluating the phenomena of Russian life and of using the experience of the workers' movement in Western Europe and Russia for more successful activity among the working masses.

These very same goals will be served by collections and pamphlets published by the Union, dedicated to a more comprehensive working-out of separate questions relating to socialism, the economic and political struggle of the working class in Russia, the illumination of different sides of Russian life from the Social-Democratic point of view, and historical sketches of revolutions and the workers' movement in the West. Accordingly, pamphlet literature will be published both for the worker-intelligentsia and for the broad layers of the working class.

In conclusion, we consider it necessary to announce to comrades active in Russia that the Union can only hope to fulfil its tasks if there is sympathy, and material and literary support on their part. Only through the establishment of proper relations and living links between Russian organisations and the Union will the latter be in a position to satisfy the urgent requirements of the workers' movement in Russia through its literary activity.



## Review of Lenin's *Tasks of the Social Democrats*, *Rabochee Delo* No. 1

*As early as its first issue, contributors to Rabochee Delo were eager to deny suggestions on the part of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group that 'Economism', a one-sided emphasis on campaigns dealing with the immediate material needs of workers, was a significant trend in the Russian Social Democracy. One example of this was the following review of Lenin's The Tasks of the Social Democrats, in which the reviewer<sup>1</sup> seized on an apparent difference between the views of the pamphlet's author and a remark made by Axelrod in the latter's preface to the work.<sup>2</sup> Axelrod had observed that Lenin's sanguine account of Social-Democratic practice, which described the propagation of both radical-democratic and socialist ideas among the broadest layers of the working class, did not reflect the actual state of affairs in the movement. The reviewer, seemingly eager to exploit this hint of a difference between two opponents, denied Axelrod's claim and argued that the Tasks was an accurate, as opposed to an idealised, view of the state of Russian Social Democracy. In doing so, he tried to present Lenin as an ally of Rabochee Delo who denied the existence of an 'Economist' trend just as they did, thus giving the impression that the journal would very much welcome Lenin into their own ranks.*

*These claims seem problematic in two important ways. Firstly, Lenin actually wrote the Tasks in Shushenskoe after he had already served one year in exile, prior to which he had been detained for a year in a St. Petersburg prison.<sup>3</sup> As such it could not have been and was probably not intended to be an objective description of the most recent developments in Social-Democratic*

1 According to Lih, this is Boris Krichevskii, one of the editors of *Rabochee Delo* (Lih 2006, p. 291).

2 For the text of this pamphlet, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 323–52. Axelrod's short preface, which is not included in the present collection, consists of a summary of the pamphlet's main ideas, though it does end with one or two slightly critical remarks. Some of these remarks are cited in the review, whilst others appear in Plekhanov's *Vademecum for the Editorial Board of Rabochee Delo*, in Chapter 4 of the present collection.

3 Specifically, in the House of Preliminary Detention on Shpalernaia Street, reserved for remand prisoners. Shushenskoe was at this time a small settlement in the south of the Krasnoyarsk region, several hundred miles south of the city of Krasnoyarsk and a slightly smaller distance from the border of modern-day Mongolia.

*practice. The pamphlet offers a general defence of Social-Democratic revolutionary methods in response to criticisms of them raised by two rival revolutionary trends, the Populist 'People's Will' and the bourgeois-democratic 'People's Justice' organisations, the aim evidently being to draw supporters of these trends to the side of Social Democracy. Given that it is part of an interaction with non-Social Democrats, it is perhaps not surprising that Lenin should fail to raise any misgivings he might have had concerning the consistency with which these methods were actually being implemented. Failure to mention such misgivings in the context of a debate with a rival political group, a context which is not acknowledged by the reviewer, should probably not be considered sound evidence that they would not be raised in an internal Party context, which is what the reviewer seems to assume. He does not seem to reckon with the possibility of Lenin facing accusations of disloyalty from his fellow Social Democrats had he acknowledged problems in the Social-Democratic Party in the course of a debate with non-Social Democrats, or with the idea that a moderate dose of hypocrisy is fairly normal when debating a political opponent.*

*The second problem is that the reviewer emphasised points of similarity between Lenin's Tasks and the Programme of Rabochee Delo. This comparison seems to be inappropriate in that the reviewer was not really comparing like with like. Lenin did not attempt to lay out a complete programme for the Russian Social Democracy in his Tasks: the pamphlet only discussed the practical activity of the movement and not the theoretical underpinning of this activity. Unknown to Rabochee Delo, Lenin had also produced a Draft Programme for the Social Democrats during this period, but it remained unpublished.<sup>4</sup> In this document, as with the programmes written by Plekhanov and Kautsky, we find the usual in-depth analysis of the evils of capitalism and the subsequent commitment to social ownership of the means of production as the ultimate goal of the Social-Democratic movement, features notably missing from Rabochee Delo's programme. For these reasons the comparison should perhaps be treated with scepticism.*

*Perhaps unsurprisingly given the problems described, the apparent plan to set Lenin against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group did not meet with success. On the contrary, all the main ideas of the review soon received a firm rebuff from a group of Siberian exiles allied with Lenin in the form of a protest against the so-called Credo of the 'Economists'. This was printed in issue 4–5 (September 1899) of Rabochee Delo, along with the offending document.<sup>5</sup> It therefore seems that the Credo was intended to serve as evidence disproving the claims made in the review printed below, whilst the Protest served as an opportunity to give vigorous*

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4 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 95–121.

5 The Credo and Lenin's Protest against it are included in the present volume as part of Plekhanov's *Vademecum* for The Editorial Board of Rabochee Delo.

*approval to Axelrod's observation on Lenin's Tasks, thus rejecting the reviewer's attempt to exploit the appearance of disagreement. This factor probably needs to be taken into account when evaluating the question of whether Lenin and his allies overreacted to a document which is often viewed as the statement of an individual point of view, and when assessing the question of whether the Lenin group was simply persecuting this individual for perceived violations of 'orthodox' political thought.*

## **Review: *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats* with a Foreword by PB Axelrod, Geneva 1898**

This pamphlet, written by a comrade active in Russia during the past few years, creates an extremely favourable impression. It testifies to the fact that our Russian comrades have already outgrown both the abstract propaganda of Social-Democratic principles as a preliminary stage and also the next stage – the process of merging the Social-Democratic circle tendency with the newly-established mass workers' movement.

There is nothing harder or more important for a young Party than the conscious and skilful adaptation of their programme to actual conditions of reality, that is, the establishment of sound tactics. True, the presence of Marxism in Russia makes this task easier in that it, as in other countries, is a true exposition of social development, of class relations and consequently of the interests of the workers' movement. Nonetheless, at first, as is always the case with practical activity, mistakes and one-sidedness in tactics are unavoidable. A young Party is always threatened with becoming cut off from life on the one hand and, on the other, by its tendency to exaggerate the significance of those means of struggle to which it owed its first successes, whilst pushing other forms of activity into the background. At the present moment, our movement, having grown up on the basis of mass strikes, could easily incline towards exclusively economic struggles – despite the fact that the basic principles of Social Democracy do not permit economic one-sidedness any more than they permit political one-sidedness. But life is the best teacher of correct tactics. Barbarian political conditions and reprisals against strikers by the government do not permit Russian Social Democracy to even think of the possibility of economic struggle in isolation, even for a moment.

Our comrade's pamphlet shows that the Social Democrats active in Russia are completely insured against any kind of one-sidedness. We would have to reproduce a good half of the pamphlet in order to convey the picture painted by its author of the *all-sidedness of Social-Democratic activity in Russia*. Therefore we refer the reader to the pamphlet itself and for now limit ourselves to highlighting the main points.

*Propaganda*, the constant dissemination of Social-Democratic ideas among individual workers or workers' circles, involves at the same time 'inseparable connections' to the doctrine of scientific socialism and to democratic ideas. The socialist enlightenment of workers consists not only in the propaganda of the general principles of socialism but also the dissemination among workers of a correct understanding of the contemporary reality – 'of the different *classes* of Russian society, of their interrelations, of the struggle of these classes with one another, of the role of the working class in this struggle and its relations to declining and developing classes and to the past and the future of capitalism, of the historical tasks of the international Social Democracy and the Russian working class' (p. 8).<sup>6</sup> Democratic ideas are defined by the author as the dissemination of 'an understanding of absolutism in all its living manifestations, of its class content, of the necessity of its overthrow, of the impossibility of successful workers' struggle without the winning of political freedom and the democratisation of the social system in Russia'. Economic *agitation*, influence on the working *masses* at the time of struggle or in the immediate preparation of a struggle for immediate economic demands, once again:

'are inseparably connected to agitation on the basis of the immediate political needs, distress and demands of the working class'. But Russian Social Democrats do not only inseparably link economic and political struggle. They also use all the phenomena of political life for political agitation, just as they use economic phenomena for economic agitation. (pp. 11–2)<sup>7</sup>

No less prudent is our author's freedom from one-sided views concerning the relation of the Social Democracy to different sections of the proletariat, besides factory and mill workers. In the first instance:

Russian Social Democracy should not fragment its forces, it should concentrate on activity among the industrial working class; but this does not

6 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 329.

7 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 332.

in the least mean that the remaining sections of the class are to be left without attention. On the contrary, agitation among the advanced layers of the proletariat is the most correct and the only way (in accordance with the spread of the movement) of awakening the whole proletariat.<sup>8</sup>

But even *now* the Social Democrats 'do not have the least intention of ignoring' handicraft workers, agricultural labourers and ruined peasants 'who, holding a miserable plot of land, are occupied with the paying off of debts through labour service and every type of casual seasonal work, in other words, hired labour'. With this goal in mind they:

will try to enlighten the advanced workers as to the problems faced by handicraft and rural workers so that the former, coming in contact with more backward layers of the proletariat, will bring the ideas of class struggle and socialism, along with the political tasks of Russian democracy in general and those of the Russian proletariat in particular, to them.<sup>9</sup>

It is not practical to send agitators to handicraft and rural workers so long as there is still a mass of work among urban factory and mill workers to be done, 'but in a great number of cases, worker-socialists will of their own accord make contact with this *milieu* and they should utilise these occasions and should understand the general tasks of the Social Democracy' (pp. 9–10).<sup>10</sup>

Finally, we note the correct view of the relation of Social Democracy to other tendencies. Not for a minute breaking with its class programme, 'Russian Social Democracy is ready to support those Russian revolutionaries who come to base their socialism on the class struggle of the proletariat' (p. 11).<sup>11</sup> As fighters against the Russian autocracy, 'Social Democrats support every revolutionary movement against the current social system, every oppressed nationality, every persecuted religion, every humiliated estate and similar, in their struggle for equal rights'.<sup>12</sup> More than that, they are ready to 'conclude alliances with revolutionaries of other tendencies for the attainment of one or other partial goal, and that readiness has been demonstrated more than once in practice' (p. 14).<sup>13</sup>

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8 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 330.

9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 330–1.

10 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 331.

11 Ibid.

12 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 334.

13 Ibid.

There are, however, grounds for hoping that revolutionaries from among the *socialists* will not hesitate to unite with the Social-Democratic Party. To use the apt expression of the author: 'theoretical reasoning proves and the practical activity of the Social Democrats shows that all *socialists* in Russia should become *Social Democrats*'.<sup>14</sup> Highly characteristic is the following fact. To the prejudiced opponents of Social-Democratic theory, the activity of the Petersburg 'Union of Struggle' proved so unexpected that

the comical rumour that the Union was not Social-Democratic was circulated. The very possibility of such a rumour already proves incorrect the popular accusation that Social Democrats ignore the political struggle. The very possibility of such a rumour already bears witness to the fact that many revolutionaries whom the theory of the Social Democrats was unable to convince, are starting to be convinced by their *practical activity*' (p. 27).<sup>15</sup>

To repeat: the pamphlet is especially valuable as it familiarises us with the state of our movement from first-hand experience with its living *praxis*. In this sense, we are unable to agree with comrade Axelrod, who in his foreword inclined towards the idea that 'in general, our movement still only strives towards that degree of development to which the tactical view of the author fully corresponds'. Axelrod bases his opinion solely on 'the declarations of younger comrades who have arrived abroad fairly recently', recognising at the same time that the newer publications of our Russian comrades and the *Manifesto* of the Social-Democratic Congress in Russia entirely reflect the view expounded in the pamphlet. We do not know which 'young' comrades Axelrod conversed with. For our part, we have cause to contend that the younger element of Russian Social Democracy – more precisely, the Social Democracy growing and acting on the basis of the recent mass movement – has for the most part already adopted the point of view of the author *in reality*.

In any case, the 'younger émigré comrades' can note with pleasure that *the essence of the pamphlet corresponds entirely with the editorial programme of Rabochee Delo*. We cannot but be gladdened by this correspondence which guarantees that our literary activity abroad will fully correspond with the needs and requirements of the Russian workers' movement. Consciousness of the complete agreement in questions of tactics between ourselves and the Russian activists doubles our forces in the service of our common cause.

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<sup>14</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 336.

<sup>15</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 346.

## Announcement in *Rabochee Delo* No. 5

In *Rabochee Delo* No. 5,<sup>1</sup> the Editorial Board announced its intention of publishing a collection of articles reflecting the various opinions expressed during the ‘revisionist controversy’, a programmatic debate which had divided the German Social Democracy since the death of Engels in 1895. This debate had begun with the publication of a series of articles by leading Party theoretician Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) in the German Party’s theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, challenging the Marxist analysis of the capitalist economic system and its conception of socialism based on the common ownership of society’s economic resources.<sup>2</sup> Rejecting these ideas, Bernstein had argued that socialism was compatible with capitalism and thus advocated a non-revolutionary strategy based on the gradual extension of democratic and social rights to the working class. At the time of *Rabochee Delo*’s announcement, the overwhelming majority of the German Social Democracy had expressed itself in favour of the Party’s 1891 programme (the *Erfurt Programme*) whilst only a minority had publicly expressed support for Bernstein’s views.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless it seems that *Rabochee Delo* regarded such a debate as useful in a period when the RSDLP as a whole had still not adopted a political programme, and in this respect it could be said to leave the journal’s support for Marxist ideas open to question.

Indeed, at first glance it seems that the journal poses as a ‘neutral’ in this debate, refusing to state its own theoretical position, and only promising to do so once the pamphlet appears. However, it is significant that, whilst offering to introduce various German theoretical authorities to a Russian audience, including those authorities who ostensibly lacked political support inside the German Party, nothing is said of the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group’s efforts to adapt Marxism to Russian conditions and to give the Russian Social Democrats a

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- 1 In other words, the second part of *Rabochee Delo* Nos. 4–5 (September–December 1899).
  - 2 Seven articles appeared under the title ‘Probleme des Sozialismus’ (‘Problems of Socialism’) in *Die Neue Zeit* xv (1896–7) i: 6, 7, 10, 25; ii: 30 & 31.
  - 3 The 1898 German Social-Democratic Party Congress (‘Stuttgart Congress’) overwhelmingly opposed a statement of Bernstein’s views and a debate at the ‘Hanover Congress’ of the following year, which is referred to in the article, produced the same outcome. Bernstein could not attend either of these events as an arrest warrant relating to him from the period of Bismarck’s Anti-Socialist Laws (1878–91) had still not expired – it was revoked in 1901. He sent a letter detailing his views to the Stuttgart meeting and a colleague, Eduard David (1863–1930), defended his views at Hanover.



*programme, or of Plekhanov's own energetic intervention in the revisionist debate.<sup>4</sup> It is hard not to interpret silence on these contributions as disapproval, and as a result, it is tempting to conclude that Rabochee Delo was rather eager to hear alternatives to Plekhanovite views and that it would eventually side with these views. Thus, despite its firm rejection of consistent 'Economism' as a practical strategy, the impression is obtained that Rabochee Delo at the very least took a tolerant attitude towards theoretical revision of Marxist ideas.*

*This does not automatically imply that Rabochee Delo aimed to convert itself into a pro-revisionist journal which published attacks on theoretical Marxism. As with the previous documents, the main aim here appears to have been the reduction of the influence of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group: having failed to separate Lenin and his co-thinkers from the Marxist emigration, it is possible that Rabochee Delo actually aimed to give a helping hand to any revisionist right wing mainly as a self-interested tactic. Specifically, its own programmatic preferences could have served as a compromise acceptable to both the followers of Plekhanov and the followers of Kuskova in the event of a sharp conflict between two such factions. Naturally, such a situation depended on the actual existence of a 'Kuskovite' tendency and the open discussion of the German controversy could have given occasion for such a tendency to form. Conversely, the absence of any such a tendency would only prove Rabochee Delo's point in their controversy with Axelrod, thus giving them credit among the signatories of the Protest and perhaps weakening the latter's connections with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Thus, regardless of the outcome of this appeal for articles, Rabochee Delo could reasonably hope to strengthen its position within the RSDLP on the basis of some quite astute political calculations.*

## **From the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* Regarding the Publication of a Theoretical Anthology**

The Social-Democratic press of Western Europe and especially that of Germany has now been occupied with a review of the scientific basis of socialism, the programme and the tactics of the workers' movement, for two years. One of

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4 See Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 315–51.



the main reasons for this has been criticism on the part of Eduard Bernstein, expressed in his articles 'Problems of Socialism', and his book *The Preconditions of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social Democracy*, in connection with which he emerged as a spokesman for the so-called 'moderate' tendency within German Social Democracy.<sup>5</sup>

The all-sided discussion and resolution of questions posed by Western-socialist criticism has great significance for us Russian Social Democrats, who act on the ideological basis of international socialism, the great theoreticians of which were Marx and Engels.

In order to give Russian comrades the opportunity to make sense of the main, most *practically* important questions for the Russian movement in this profoundly interesting polemic, the Editorial Board of the Union has decided to publish a collection of the best articles written by representatives of both of the tendencies which emerged in the course of the debate. In this collection, alongside the articles of Bernstein, separate chapters of his book and the speech by David, a defender of his views at the Hanover Congress,<sup>6</sup> articles by the main opponent of 'Bernsteinian' views, the well-known theoretical authority and publicist of the German Workers' Party Karl Kautsky,<sup>7</sup> and the most important chapters of Kautsky's book, *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme*,<sup>8</sup> will also be included, in addition to articles by the outstanding practical leaders of the workers' movement, August Bebel (his speech at the

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5 Bernstein 1993. For many years this work was known in English as *Evolutionary Socialism*, the title given to it by an earlier translator, Edith Harvey in 1907 (Bernstein 1961). This earlier version excluded a significant part of the text which was not considered to be of interest to an English speaking audience.

6 The Hanover Congress of the SPD took place from 9–14 October 1899 and, among other questions, discussed Bernstein's revisionist views, passing a resolution against them. Fellow revisionist Eduard David (1863–1930) spoke for Bernstein at this Congress as Bernstein himself was unable to attend.

7 Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) was one of the main theoreticians of Germany Social Democracy. In 1883 he founded *Die Neue Zeit* (*The New Times*) as the Social-Democratic Party's theoretical journal and in 1888 was tasked by Engels with editing Marx's manuscript *Theories of Surplus Value*. He played an important role in drafting and explaining the Party's 1891 'Erfurt' programme and defended this programme against Bernstein in the late 1890s. However, unlike figures such as Rosa Luxemburg and Plekhanov, he opposed moves to expel the revisionists from the German Party, advocating a purely intellectual struggle with their ideas. Later Kautsky became better known for his ambiguous position on World War I and his ideological opposition to Bolshevism.

8 Kautsky, 1899. No English translation of this work appears to exist.

Hanover Congress)<sup>9</sup> and Victor Adler.<sup>10</sup> In a special concluding article, the main results of these remarkable debates will be summarised, and conclusions will be drawn that are adapted to Russian conditions in an afterword from the Editorial Board.

By publishing this collection, the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* wants to begin the task of satisfying the pressing demand of the worker-intelligentsia and socialist youth for literature dedicated to the explanation of the theoretical and practical questions of revolutionary activity.

Russian reality and the liberation struggle of the working class places before the Social Democracy a mass of theoretical and practical tasks, a mass of programmatic, tactical and organisational questions which possess profound vital interest and demand urgent resolution. On the other hand, the absence in Russia of conditions necessary for the free development of socialist thought and the continuity of revolutionary experience has given rise to the harmful success of the 'vacillations of thought' tendency, and to mistaken views regarding the basic tasks of the workers' movement. Therefore, an especially strong demand for literature aimed at the socialist intelligentsia, propagandists and agitators, and which answers contemporary questions, is felt by us.

In order to satisfy this demand, the Editorial Board will, in accordance with its means, assist with the publication of anthologies of original and translated articles, and also separate books dedicated to the elaboration of the theoretical questions and the practical tasks placed before socialists by everyday life. Accordingly, with the goal of the most unbiased and comprehensive explanation of the disputed questions of theory and practice, and in order to assist the *ideological and practical unification* of socialists active in Russia, who are usually separated only as a result of several practical questions, the Editorial Board as a matter of principle speaks in favour of giving space in these collections to those views deviating from the generally-accepted opinion on one or

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9 August Bebel (1840–1913) was one of the best-known worker-leaders of the German Social Democracy, serving as a near perennial member of the Reichstag from 1867 until his death. He was on the left of the movement, supporting the First International and advocating the ideas of Marx and Engels. He was gaoled for two years in 1872 on obscure charges, seemingly in revenge for his earlier opposition to the Franco-Prussian War and his support for the Paris Commune. During the revisionist controversy he was seen as a key proponent of Marxist orthodoxy along with Kautsky, though like Kautsky he was prone to seeking accommodation with the revisionists.

10 Victor Adler (1852–1918) was a founder and leader of the Austrian Social-Democratic Labour Party, aiding its unification at the 1889 Hainfeld Congress on the basis of a class-struggle programme. He was subsequently a parliamentarian who campaigned for universal suffrage. He took a patriotic position during World War I.

another issue, provided that, generally speaking, the authors stand on a basis of scientific socialism.

But the success of this initiative depends entirely on the active sympathy towards it on the part of comrades both in Russia and abroad; it will be achieved only through actual literary co-operation and material help from them.

Collections of this type will be published in accordance with the receipt of literary material and moneys sent in especially for its publication.

Thus we now appeal to all comrades who are sympathetic to this enterprise with a request to give us the material resources needed to more quickly publish the first anthology: *The Programmatic and Tactical Questions of the Social-Democratic Movement*, the printing of which, given a length of 15–20 printers' sheets, will cost not less than one thousand five hundred francs (around five hundred and sixty rubles).

Without the receipt by us of special financial donations, the appearance of this anthology could be delayed and this is particularly undesirable because the questions examined in it have now become burning questions of the day in Russia too.

In conclusion, we once again ask Russian and foreign comrades to send us articles for publication in anthologies.

## Plekhanov's *Vademecum* for the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* and Editorial Comments on the *Protest of the 17* in *Rabochee Delo* No. 4

By February 1900, the date when Plekhanov's *Vademecum* for the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* was published, the controversy over the existence of 'Economism' had matured into a wide-ranging power struggle inside the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group's initial response to the criticism directed at Axelrod in the review of Lenin's Tasks had been an attempt to publish a reply to it in the form of a short pamphlet, Axelrod's Open Letter to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.<sup>1</sup> However, one of the leaders of the Union Abroad, Vladimir Petrovich Akimov (1872–1921) opposed the publication of this pamphlet using the organisation's press and resources, possibly on the grounds that it referred to an unpublished example of 'Economist' thinking, A Reply to Axelrod's Pamphlet 'On the Question of the Contemporary Tasks and Tactics of Russian Social Democracy' by Sergei Nikolaevich Prokopovich (1871–1955).<sup>2</sup> This opposition appears to have been viewed as an attempt at censorship by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, as Axelrod argued in the pamphlet that an anti-Marxist current sympathetic to 'Economism' had taken over the Union Abroad at its First Congress in October 1898. Only after a heated exchange of views in the Social-Democratic emigration was the pamphlet published on the Union's press, towards the end of 1899.

Seemingly in response to Akimov's resistance to publication, Plekhanov addressed a letter to the administration of the Union Abroad in September 1899 in which he demanded: access to the organisation's press (which had originally been donated by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group); the right of his circle to pro-

1 Aksel'rod 1899. In this pamphlet, Axelrod replied to the criticism directed towards him in *Rabochee Delo*'s review of Lenin's *Task of the Social Democrats*, citing Prokopovich's manuscript as evidence of 'Economism' in the Union Abroad as well as events at the organisation's First Congress, and arguing for political agitation among the working class in favour of the overthrow of the autocracy. As part of his argument, Axelrod rejected the identification of revolutionary politics with terrorism, an association he attributed to both 'People's Will' and his 'Economist' opponents in the Russian Social Democracy – the former advocating, the latter opposing, political struggle conceived in this manner.

2 This manuscript finally found its way into print as the penultimate document in Plekhanov's *Vademecum*.

duce its own literature on a regular basis, the right to receive a proportion of the Union's income to fund such projects and the right to participate in the practical administration of the Union, which was at this stage being carried out exclusively by supporters of Rabochee Delo. Not only this, he presented these demands as an ultimatum, stating that if they were not granted, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and its supporters would leave the Union Abroad, a move he believed would bring about its liquidation.<sup>3</sup> He regarded this as being to his advantage on the grounds that the assets of the Union would then pass to the RSDLP who would then be obliged to return them to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, their original owners.<sup>4</sup>

Plekhanov undoubtedly plotted this stratagem from a position of weakness. A successful conclusion to the struggle – securing control over the Union's resources and printing press – depended in practice on the existence of an authoritative RSDLP structure which could act as an arbiter of the disputed property and which would, having investigated the case, deliver it to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. No such structure existed at this stage and the Plekhanovites lacked the least connections with Russia: most of their key supporters were serving terms of exile in Siberia. Rabochee Delo, by contrast, did have a handful of collaborators who were either in St. Petersburg or else had the capability of leading an underground existence inside Russia.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, with the emergence of a new regional Social-Democratic newspaper, Iuzhnyi Rabochii, at the beginning of 1900, and an accompanying interest in re-establishing the central bodies of the RSDLP, the followers of Rabochee Delo were in a somewhat stronger practical position. They had a greater opportunity, via a new RSDLP Congress, of reshaping the Party in accordance with their own views and of resolving the émigré dispute in a manner that was to their own liking. Therefore, Plekhanov's attempt to gain control of the resources of the émigré Social Democrats via the re-establishment of the RSDLP would most likely have been frustrated by this stronger opponent.

Indeed, at the time of its publication, two representatives of the Rabochee Delo trend were already negotiating with Lenin and a representative of Iuzhnyi Rabochii over the matter of a new RSDLP Congress,<sup>6</sup> Rabochee Delo thus trying to reassert their solidarity with Lenin, which had previously been declared in

3 Communications to this effect dated from September 1899 can be found in: Potresov and Nikolaevskii (eds.) 1967, pp. 279–80.

4 Potresov and Nikolaevskii (eds.) 1967, p. 305.

5 Ekaterina Dmitrievna Kuskova ('Mr. M.M.' in the *Vademecum*) and Sergei Nikolaevich Prokopovich ('Mr. N.N.') were in St. Petersburg, whereas Zemah Koppelson ('Mr. G.') had extensive experience as a Bund organiser.

6 Details of this incident are described in Chapter 5.

*Krichevskii's review of The Tasks of the Social Democrats. The Vademecum comes across as an attempt to rescue this unpromising situation. The pamphlet is for the most part made up of unpublished statements written by three Russian Social Democrats, all of whom had been involved in the Union Abroad: Prokopovich, Ekaterina Dmitrievna Kuskova (1869–1958) and Zemah Koppelson (1869–1933). All of these statements expressed anti-political, 'Economist' statements in the clearest possible manner, asserting that Russian workers were not capable of understanding political ideas, and that only agitation on their immediate, concrete economic interests could have any effect on them. Crucially, and quite consistently, two of these figures clearly rejected the idea of forming a workers' party in Russia, declaring themselves to be opponents of the RSDLP's existence, whilst one, Koppelson, did not appear to take this view, but nonetheless expressed a fairly dismissive scepticism towards the new Party whilst expressing his closest sympathy for one of the 'anti-Party Economists'. In 'exposing' this trend, Plekhanov was evidently aiming to secure an open discussion of it at any planned RSDLP Congress, thus attempting to influence its agenda, despite being marginalised in the negotiations over the convening of the Congress.*

*More pointedly, the appearance of such material at a time when Koppelson was one of the Rabochee Delo representatives negotiating with Lenin and Iuzhnyi Rabochii over the reorganisation of the RSDLP<sup>7</sup> would have caused the latter some embarrassment, whilst serving as a warning to Lenin and others as to the instability – and, in all likelihood, duplicity – of the figures from the Union Abroad with whom they were discussing. Whereas in public Rabochee Delo had tried to declare its solidarity with a somewhat sceptical Lenin whilst denying the very existence of 'Economism', in private at least one of their key supporters could almost simultaneously be seen to declare his solidarity with plainly anti-Marxist and anti-socialist views (and seemingly in a letter to a Plekhanovite).<sup>8</sup> In itself this may not seem to represent a serious misdemeanour, especially given that the Koppelson, who defended Prokopovich and Kuskova, was not the same as the Krichevskii who praised Lenin. However, it did make Krichevskii's protestation of ignorance concerning 'Economist' views look disingenuous – it turns out that one of the 'Economists' in question was the main practical organiser of the Union Abroad who was publicly playing a significant role in plans for an RSDLP Congress. It was in this respect that the*

<sup>7</sup> See previous note.

<sup>8</sup> The recipient of the letters of 'Mr. G.' was Iosif Solomonovich Blumenfeld (1865–1941), a supporter of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group who was heavily involved in the production of pamphlet and periodical literature and who later managed the *Iskra* printing press.

*pamphlet really struck a blow: it sought to sow distrust against the Union Abroad activists who were at that stage operating in Russia, thus working against their plans to call an 'Economist'-dominated Party Congress which would award the resources of the Union to Rabochee Delo.*

*Aside from Plekhanov's clever strategic thinking, which is far from apparent when studying the text itself, the Vademecum is obviously of great interest as a collection of 'Economist' documents, and it is mainly for this reason that it has been included in the present collection. One of the repeated complaints of Plekhanov and his allies during this period concerned the unwillingness of the 'Economists' to state their views openly and their tendency to deny the existence of such views, a complaint which seems to be broadly justified when the private documents collected in the Vademecum are considered. Thus, whilst some might question the ethics of publishing such items without their authors' approval, the pamphlet makes interesting reading for all those who wish to study the history of 'Economism' in the Russian Social Democracy.*

*The documents it contains illustrate very clearly the links between the views of individuals such as Prokopovich and Kuskova and those of Bernstein, whilst at the same time revealing the existence of the somewhat contradictory phenomenon of pro-RSDLP 'Economism,' a trend which approved of initiatives taken to form a workers' Party in Russia but which nonetheless wished to limit the scope of its activity and its radicalism to supposedly 'realistic' concrete campaigns, which were to be mostly but not exclusively 'economic' in character. The question of which of these two variants was closer to 'Bernsteinian' thinking naturally remains an intriguing one, as Bernstein himself sought to remain a member of the German Social-Democratic Party, but in somewhat different circumstances – the Party was well-established as a political force. In reality, it seems that Kuskova and Prokopovich were probably the rather more consistent adepts of 'Bernsteinian' thinking in so far as they expressed more clearly a refusal to believe in the revolutionary potential of the working class, and with this posed a direct challenge to Marxist thinking: their difference with Bernstein on the question of a workers' party seems to have been almost entirely based on the perceived weakness of the workers' movement in Russia relative to 'the West'. Conversely, Koppelson and Rabochee Delo appear to have been manoeuvring between these views and those of the group around Lenin, probably in an attempt to construct an ideologically broad Social-Democratic movement in Russia whilst retaining only superficial ideological loyalties of their own.*



## ***Vademecum for the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo****

*A collection of material, published by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, with a foreword by Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov<sup>9</sup>*

*O children, how dangerous is your age!  
A young mouse, knowing nothing of the world,  
Almost came to grief!<sup>10</sup>*

### **Foreword**

A debate sufficiently strange to the undedicated reader has been conducted for some time in our émigré Social-Democratic literature, the subject of which is the question of whether or not there is a tendency which goes by the title of 'economic' in our young Russian Social Democracy. In the opinion of one of the contending sides, Pavel Axelrod, who expresses the view of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, such a tendency not only exists, it may also exert a very harmful influence on the future development of our Party under certain conditions. The other side, the Editorial Board of the *quasi*-periodical publication *Rabochee Delo*, does not want to agree with Axelrod. They think that his opinion is deprived of the least basis.

To a person not involved in the internal business of our Party, such an argument might seem uninteresting, all the more so because the opposing sides have sometimes expressed themselves with half-hints understood by just a few people. But in reality this argument has great practical significance, and thus the 'Emancipation of Labour' group considers it necessary to aid its resolution by publishing the present collection of materials.

This collection is dedicated to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*, as it more than anybody needs to become acquainted with the documents contained within it. In order to make its use as a collection easier, I have supplied a little commentary.

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9 Price: 1 Franc; Printed on the press of a group of old Narodovoltsi; Geneva, February 1900. [Information on front cover of the pamphlet]

10 The verse is taken from a fable 'The Cock, the Cat and the Young Mouse' (Dmitriev 1967, p. 187), closely based on the Aesop fable of the same name, in which the inexperienced mouse considers the cat to be harmless and the cock dangerous in consequence of their external appearances.



However, before getting down to the commentary, I believe it is necessary to remind the other readers of the vicissitudes of the argument between Axelrod and the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.

In 1898, a pamphlet was published in Geneva with a foreword by Axelrod: *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats*, written in Russia by one of the most notable figures in our Party. In his foreword, Axelrod made the following observation:

In his pamphlet, our author appeals mainly to opponents from the camp of the revolutionary intelligentsia. He tries to dispel the prejudices and biases against Social Democracy that have taken root in them. This circumstance leaves a special imprint on his work. In it, almost in spite of the will of the author, that which should be is identified with that which is: the tasks and tactics which the Russian Social Democracy should follow in order to remain true to the spirit of its teaching are depicted by the author as if they are already unconditionally dominant in reality. We have lived too long outside Russia and too far from the field of struggle to judge with complete certainty the actual state of our movement. We are able to form an opinion on it largely owing to the announcements of the younger comrades who have arrived abroad fairly recently. And these comrades, with the occasional exception, are still sufficiently far from that practical outlook on the basis of which the author of the present brochure stands and they also believe that the majority of active groups think as they do on matters relating to practical activity.

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* did not like this observation. In the very first issue of the publication, they printed an anonymous review of the aforementioned pamphlet in which we find the following retort to Axelrod:

We repeat, the pamphlet is especially valuable is so far as it familiarises us first hand with the real state of our movement, with its living practice. In this sense, we are unable to agree with comrade Axelrod, who in his foreword inclines toward the idea that 'in general our movement aims at that degree of development which completely corresponds to the tactical view of the author'. Axelrod bases his opinion only on 'the declarations of younger comrades who arrived abroad fairly recently', recognising at the same time that the most recent publications of our Russian comrades and the *Manifesto* of the Social-Democratic Congress in Russia entirely reflect the opinions laid out in the pamphlet. We do not know which 'young comrades' Axelrod is talking about. For our part, we have cause

to contend that the younger element of Russian Social Democracy – more precisely, the Social Democracy growing and acting on the basis of the most recent mass movement – has for the most part already adopted the point of view of the author in reality.

Axelrod replied to this retort with an open letter to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.<sup>11</sup>

Written in August, this letter – for various reasons – only appeared at the end of December last year. During this period, the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* once again announced their disagreement with Axelrod in their afterword to a certain *Protest* from a group of Russian comrades that was published by them, a protest directed against an especially clear expression of the economic way of thinking.<sup>12</sup> This new announcement was made *apropos* of the following.

The authors of the *Protest*, having clearly and decisively expressed their solidarity with the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group, say that this new occasion for exposing a way of Russian Social-Democratic thinking, which has already been analysed and rejected by them, shows how well-grounded the fears of Axelrod were when, at the end of 1897, he set the following perspective before his readers: ‘The workers’ movement does not leave the narrow channel of purely economic clashes between workers and the bosses and in itself, on the whole, lacks a political character; in fact, the most advanced layers of the proletariat follow the revolutionary circles and factions of the so-called intelligentsia in the struggle for political freedom’.

The authors of the *Protest* think that the Russian Social Democrats should declare all-out war on the economic tendency because its triumph would lead to the passing into reality of the perspective Axelrod points to as an unpleasant possibility. They persistently and passionately advise comrades to direct every effort towards ensuring that another perspective, described by Axelrod in the following lines, is realised: ‘Another perspective: the Social Democracy organises the Russian proletariat into an independent political Party, fighting for freedom partially alongside and in union with the bourgeois revolutionary factions (in so far as they exist), and partially attracting the most pro-masses and revolutionary elements from the intelligentsia directly to its ranks, or at least securing the following of these elements’.

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* declared themselves completely in solidarity with the authors of the *Protest*, but they did not like the indubitable

11 Aksel'rod 1899. See footnote 1 of this chapter.

12 The documents in question are printed below and also appear in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 167–82.

fact that these authors are entirely in solidarity with the Axelrod whose opinion the Editorial Board disputes. That is why they hurried to express their firm conviction that the 'symbol of faith' (otherwise known as the *Credo*), against which the authors of the protest rebelled, represented nothing more than the opinion of isolated individuals and that consequently 'the fear of comrade Axelrod, which was described by him as the first possible perspective, neither in 1897 nor now has a serious basis in the actual course of the Russian workers' movement'.

In order to still further highlight how baseless the fears of Axelrod are, the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* introduced the following considerations:

Since the broad strike movement of the second half of the 1890s, the great struggle (1896–7) of the Petersburg weavers and the victory of the workers over the government – which compelled the legal limitation of the working day in Russia – it has been hard to think that 'the workers' movement does not leave the narrow channel of purely economic clashes between workers and bosses and in itself lacks a political character'. Nor is the basis of the gloomy fears of comrade Axelrod demonstrated, in our view, by the mere 'possibility' of such a 'programme' as the above-printed *Credo* 'appearing'. Such 'programmes' are most likely the private fantasies of political infants (though they be of sufficient age in reality), which have appeared and will continue to appear so long as Russian Social Democracy has not attained a united opinion on the basic tasks of the workers' movement in Russia through the working-out of a definite programme and definite tactics for the Party. When this is done, all will know the true value of 'programmes' of the *Credo* type, and only then will the political impostures of separate individuals and little groups – the outstanding fruits of their wavering between ideas expressing the real character of the workers' movement and 'symbols of faith' composed by new trends in Russian Social Democracy – become impossible.

In these profound considerations, the first thing that strikes the reader is a manifest rearrangement of ideas.

When Axelrod described the first of the aforementioned perspectives, he did not make the least prophesy as regards the future of our workers' movement. This perspective was intended to show what form our workers' movement would take if (n.b. 'if') that which was so passionately and persistently desired by the adherents of the economic tendency were realised. If the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* was not in agreement with Axelrod, then it was necessary for them to show that the perspective described by him could not be realised

even if the adherents of the economic tendency triumphed. Having shown this, the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* would have exposed the mistake of Axelrod once and for all, and the argument would have ended with the complete and decisive defeat of one of the contending sides. But was the aforementioned Editorial Board in a position to show this? No it was not. Quite the contrary. The *Protest* that was printed by them contains the most shining and unquestionable evidence of the perspicacity and far-sightedness of Axelrod. Yes, indeed. What is it that the authors of that 'symbol of faith' (*Credo*) are striving towards, and which is so heatedly and decisively condemned by the authors of the *Protest*? The authors of the *Credo* now aspire towards the realisation of one of those perspectives (more precisely – the first one) that was identified by Axelrod. If A is identical to B, then the realisation of A is equally the realisation of B. Perhaps Axelrod is right? Of course he is! It is impossible not to feel sorry for people who do not understand such simple things.

But is it possible to add the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* to the sum total of such people? I must confess that I do not think this to be the case. It seems to me that this Editorial Board perfectly well understood the degree to which Axelrod was right, and that it was precisely this unpleasant consciousness of their opponent's correctness that led them to their rearrangement of ideas, to a distortion of Axelrod's words. Axelrod spoke about which direction our workers' movement would take if things went as the advocates of the 'economic' tendency wanted them to, but the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* ascribes to him the idea that our workers' movement is in general not capable of leaving the narrow channel of purely economic clashes with the bosses. Somebody wishing to characterise the properties of gunpowder says: 'if you throw a lighted match on it, there will be an explosion'. And you cry out that Peter is not going to throw any match! It is quite possible that you are right, but it does not change the qualities of gunpowder and its flares up all the same if a lighted match is thrown on it. Are these good methods of argument? And are they necessary for people convinced of their correctness?

When they began their polemic with Axelrod, the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* 'did not know' who the comrades that supported the 'economic' tendency were. But now they have deemed it necessary to come out against *Rabochaia Mysl'*,<sup>13</sup> in which the aforementioned tendency has been taken to absurd proportions. But you must realise that *Rabochaia Mysl'* did not come

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13 *Rabochaia Mysl'* was the newspaper of the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle from 1897–1902. It carried certain articles expressing 'Economist' views and which took a negative attitude towards the Social-Democratic intelligentsia and the RSDLP, though over time its political views appear to have displayed little consistency. For a general discussion of its

into being yesterday, and that when the Editorial Board 'did not know' the circumstances indicated by Axelrod, *Rabochaia Mysl'* had already given sufficient occasion for an evaluation of all the merits of its way of thinking. How was it possible that the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* 'did not know' what it was?

But do not think, dear reader, that Axelrod had only *Rabochaia Mysl'* in his sights. No, he hinted at others too, and I will speak about these below.

Having distorted the words of Axelrod, the upright Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* considers it necessary to point to the successes of our workers' movement as if they had not been brought to the attention of their opponent. It is not subject to the least doubt that the Russian workers' movement has already recorded serious successes and that Russian workers have already gained some serious victories. But neither the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in general, nor Axelrod in particular, denies these victories and successes in the least. On the contrary, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group only sees in them striking evidence of the possibility of a broad workers' movement, a possibility they have not ceased indicating since the appearance of their first publications; that is, since a time (1883) when the present editors of *Rabochee Delo* were either, owing to their youth, entirely 'carefree' as regards any kind of 'programme', or were stagnating in Populist prejudices. And if the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* now finds it necessary to browbeat us, then it only shows how difficult and annoying the position in which they stand now is: first, the wish to refute Axelrod come what may, owing to hints that had displeased them; then, second, the appearance in Russia of a literary work (*Credo*), the contents of which represented a brilliant confirmation of the words of this very same Axelrod. Alas, annoyance is a bad counsellor!

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* is firmly convinced of the fact that the *Credo* is nothing more than the 'opinion of isolated individuals'. This firm conviction is very comforting both to the Editorial Board and to the readership of this journal. But that is not the point. We need to know whether or not there are many of these 'isolated individuals' and what sort of position they occupy in the Party. What if there are many of them? And what if they occupy a status in our ranks through which they can strongly assist the triumph of the economic tendency? The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* began to argue with Axelrod because he had hinted that there were more than a few supporters of the 'economic' tendency among our young comrades abroad. Notwithstanding this, Axelrod told the unvarnished truth. The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* knows this perfectly well. But the true state of affairs was not known to its

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contents, see Lih 2006, pp. 240–78. For a translated extract from one of its more radically 'Economist' editorials, see Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 242–5.

readers. They could have thought that Axelrod had expressed himself in this manner only thanks to an inclination (attributed to him by the editors of *Rabochee Delo*) towards 'gloomy fears'. And so, in order to show the readers the true state of affairs, Axelrod wrote his letter to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* and with that very same goal in mind, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group is now publishing the present collection of documents.

Our group thinks that at the current time it is necessary and useful to (in accordance with [Ferdinand] Lassalle's expression), *aussprechen was ist* – 'describe things as they really stand'.

The first of the attached documents represents nothing more than a reprint of the *Protest* of our Russian comrades against the advocates of the 'economic' tendency. We consider its reproduction here necessary for the convenience of the reader, who might wish to have it to hand in the capacity of required information and for the purposes of certain comparisons that are not without interest.<sup>14</sup>

The second document is a letter to Axelrod from Mr. M.M.,<sup>15</sup> one of the authors of a pamphlet against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. This letter,

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14 On the question of the *Protest* somebody wrote to me:

Dear Comrade, it is clear that not a single resolution regarding the *Credo* has been received abroad, in so far as nothing is said of them in the *Protest* of the Russian Social Democrats with the afterword by the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.

Notwithstanding this, a second group of Social Democrats from a different town in Russia which is also made up, coincidentally, of 17 people and among which I can count myself, unanimously supported the protest mentioned above. Unfortunately, I cannot cite this resolution word-for-word, but the essence of it was unquestionably this: we are entirely in agreement with the initiators of the protest in so far as it entirely expresses the basic position on the principles and the tasks of Russian Social Democracy as they were formulated in the 'Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Party'.

Yours etc. [Plekhanov's footnote]

15 'Mr. M.M.' was Ekaterina Dmitrievna Kuskova (1869–1958), the author of the *Credo* which provoked Lenin's *Protest* of September 1899. Both these documents are included in the *Vademecum*. Initially an active Populist, she considered herself a Marxist by the mid-1890s and moved first to Belgium and then to Germany with the aim of consolidating her new views through first-hand experience of the labour movement in Western Europe. She joined the Union of Russian Social Democrats in 1897 in Berlin, moving back to St. Petersburg and becoming a member of the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle in 1899. By this time she had become an outspoken supporter of revisionism and she broke with the RSDLP following the publication of the *Credo* and the controversy surrounding it. Later she helped found the Kadet Party but did not remain a member for long. She was a

which was received by Axelrod in the spring of 1898 and which touches on the most important practical questions of our Social Democracy, contains within itself the embryo of those very opinions which now find full expression in the *Credo*. The author of the letter asks to be excused for his 'lengthy and poorly-connected exposition of elementary truths'. Indeed, his exposition is lengthy and disconnected, and therefore it is not easy to understand what the 'truths' revealed in it constitute. Nonetheless, on a careful reading they shine forth with sufficient clarity. The most unquestionable of these 'truths' consists in the fact that, for the author of the letter, '*after Belgium, it became shameful to speak about social revolution*'.<sup>16</sup> These words, which are not underlined in the letter, are printed in our collection *in italics* as we want to draw the particular attention of our readers to them: in them is contained the psychology of a whole tendency. Why did the author become ashamed to speak about social revolution 'after Belgium'? Because, he says, in Belgium he saw the antagonism between the petty craftsmen and the workers in the big factories and an antagonism between an intelligentsia dreaming about the seizure of power and social revolution on the one hand, and workers defending their real class interests on the other. But why on earth is it shameful to speak of 'social revolution' in view of the antagonism between handicrafts and big industry? In reality, does not the economic development of contemporary society eliminate this antagonism in its own way, clearing the ground for big enterprises? And from where did the author of the letter acquire the notion of an antagonism between people 'dreaming' of 'social revolution' and workers defending their class interests? What revolution is he speaking about? About the one which would transfer power to the hands of the proletariat and which would put an end to the rule of the capitalists. But does such a revolution really contradict the 'real interests' of workers? It seems to us that it does not contradict them at all. Naturally, in Belgium, just as everywhere else, there are still quite a few workers who have poorly assimilated the idea of a workers' ('social', according to the terminology of the author of the letter) revolution. But there is still a big difference between

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minor 'independent' public figure in 1917 and was elected to the pro-Kerensky Democratic Conference and pre-Parliament in August–September. She was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922 for perceived pro-White agitation during the famine crisis of 1921 and spent the rest of her life in Western Europe, moving to Switzerland before the outbreak of the Second World War.

16 Kuskova appears to have spent the years 1895–7 in Belgium following her marriage to Prokopovich (see note 26), who at this time was studying at the Free University in Brussels.



incomprehension and antagonism. And if the idea of a workers' revolution is still alien to many workers, then it is necessary to explain it to them and not to be 'ashamed' to speak to them about it. But 'after Belgium' the author of the letter came to the conclusion that 'real interests' exclude 'dreams' in general and dreams about workers' revolution in particular. This conviction forms the basis of this letter, just as it formed the basis of the *Credo*.

The author of the letter is steeped in that mood which, in our literature, carries the expressive title of 'cold water' [*trezvennyi*]. He says that to advocate the overthrow of the autocracy (out-and-out revolution) among the workers means to expose them to the greatest danger. What does this danger consist in? In this: 'a sea of blood will submerge the workers' movement at its birth'. A sea of blood – that is, of course, very terrible (more terrible than the celebrated 'fire' and the no-less celebrated 'brimstone'), but in general it is not convincing. Why would a 'sea of blood' submerge the workers' movement? If I am not mistaken, it is because our workers' movement is still only 'being born'. But you realise that if it is only being born, then we only have weak revolutionary elements, and this means that for the present there is still little chance not only of 'revolution', but even of any kind of serious uprising. So where does the 'sea of blood' come from? The author says that it could perhaps be shed by the 'spontaneous movement'. But he himself on this occasion notes with complete accuracy that 'the spontaneous movement is not a programmatic question'. Then why on earth does he start talking about a sea of blood? Are there really already signs of the beginnings of a 'spontaneous movement'? Are our popular masses already taking up arms? Are people who speak to workers about the overthrow of the autocracy really calling them to an immediate insurrection? There has been no such appeal in any of the publications appearing under the editorial control of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. What on earth is the author of the letter talking about?

About this. He wants to show that the revolution should, before everything else, take place 'in the working class itself'. This really is one of the most elementary truths, but not everybody understands this elementary truth correctly. And it is understood worst of all by the author of the letter, which is now being analysed by myself.

Thanks to his 'cold-water' mood, he has not assimilated the materialist understanding of history. He is an idealist with pretensions to 'scientificity' and in this we find the source both of his own theoretical misadventures and those of his associates.

He is forever talking about the real interests of the working class. How does he understand these real interests? You will no doubt be pleased to hear his own words.

The future system depends not only on the class of workers, but also on a combination of all the conditions of production, and the latter cannot enter into active, programmatic activity of the working class: they are a great unknown, probably even to God himself. To the workers only two things are known: 1) their own, clearly conscious concrete interests and 2) their position among other classes. Consequently, the role of the super-structure, of intelligent Social Democracy, is to understand the interest of the given moment, that active-psychic base which acts as the motive force of the masses and, secondly, to understand the position of these masses in the midst of all the other conditions of the given moment as broadly and as correctly as possible. The abstract preaching of socialism and solidarity can be of little help here; conversely, the correctly indicated road of active struggle – whether it leads to success or not – does much: on the one hand it teaches the workers to fight, and on the other, once again concretely, it points out obstacles, thus generates new interest. In this way, knowledge of the methods of struggle is unavoidably linked to the broadening of horizons and goals during the struggle itself.

And so the future system cannot enter into ‘active’ programmatic activity. Passive programmatic activity, perhaps? I think this too cannot be the case. ‘The future system’ is the goal and as such it does not enter into ‘activity’ (active, passive or otherwise), which only serves as a means for obtaining the goal. This is just another example of an ‘elementary’ truth; it is more correct to say that it is a truism, the demonstration of which, ‘with the learned appearance of a connoisseur’,<sup>17</sup> would be strange to say the least.

And what is this ‘future system’? In their works, socialist-utopians portrayed the future social system recommended by themselves in great detail. Contemporary socialists do not like such portrayals. ‘The future system’ figures in their programmes only as an indication of the necessity and the inevitability of the elimination (and not merely the mitigation) of capitalist exploitation, and of the conversion of all the means of production and the exchange of products into social property. In this sense, ‘the future system’ is the main goal of socialist activity and to say that it should not enter into the socialist programme means either to completely misunderstand the latter’s concept, or to fundamentally reject socialism. We will see that in 1898, the author of the

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17 The quotation is from Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* (1833) ch. 1 st. 5. The verse in question characterises Onegin as somebody whose social graces conceal his deficiencies in education. (See Pushkin 1881 for an alternative translation.)

letter as well as other 'young comrades', were very much inclined towards such a rejection.

'The future system depends not only on the class of workers, but also on a combination of all the conditions of production'. This opposition of the class of workers to conditions of production sounds very strange in the mouth of someone who calls himself a Marxist and who should know that the division of society into classes and the degree of development of each of them taken separately has a close causal relation to the conditions of production. However, we will put this to one side. We will remember that the letter is not an article and that it is therefore possible to forgive slips of the pen and other such blunders that are entirely unforgivable in a work that had been prepared for the press. But the further reasoning of the letter's author concerning 'the interests of the working class' are not slips; he considers them serious, new, important and instructive. What does the essence of this reasoning consist in? In this, that the correctly indicated road of struggle 'generates new interest'. How does it do this? By teaching the workers to fight and pointing out obstacles to them. To indicate obstacles to workers and to teach them to fight means to develop their self-awareness. It turns out that the interests of the workers are born from a development of the workers' self-awareness. This is indeed new in the mouths of people calling themselves Marxists. The author of the letter thinks that consciousness of a given interest is identical with its 'generation'. This is an idealist point of view which was adopted, for example, by the French Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century, and which was finally eliminated with the successes of the social sciences in the nineteenth.

'To the workers only two things are known: their own, clearly conscious, concrete interest and their position among other classes'. This also needs to be examined. Do the workers always know their own interests and their position among other classes? We, advocates of the materialist view of history, think that this is far from always the case. We do not doubt that the consciousness of people is determined by their social existence. The appearance of new aspects of existence determines a new content of consciousness of its own accord. But this definition of consciousness by existence is a whole process that is completed during the passage of a greater or lesser amount of time. That is why the workers far from always know their 'real interests'. And that is why, for example, some German workers do not support the Social Democrats but the 'free-thinkers' or the Centre Party, or even the big landowners. 'The role of the superstructure – the intelligent Social Democracy' is clearly and precisely defined by the relationship of consciousness to existence. It should understand the economic and the (economically determined) socio-political situation of a given country, through which the economic interests and politi-

cal tasks of the working class are defined. Having itself comprehended these interests and these tasks, it should immediately bring the working class to an understanding of them. It should endeavour to speed up that process thanks to which the content of consciousness is adapted to modes of existence. Occupied with this important and noble work, it not only can, but should, speak about social revolution and about the seizure of power by the working class in so far as both represent necessary preliminary conditions for the final liberation of the working class from the yoke of capitalism. Naturally, it is necessary to speak about this and all similar things skilfully. But who does not know this? It is obvious that speaking about social revolution does not mean calling workers to the immediate shedding of 'a sea of blood'. Once again, who does not know this? In Turgenev's *Virgin Soil*, Nezhdanov cries to the peasants: 'Forward! For Freedom! Let us die!' and so on.<sup>18</sup> The peasants understand nothing in all this shouting and decide that Nezhdanov is an angry landowner. The entire scene is completely absurd. It is a caricature, corresponding very little to the tactics of Russian revolutionary Populists and not at all to the tactics of contemporary Social Democracy. So why does the author of the letter find it necessary to censure Nezhdanovite tactics 'after Belgium'? It is amazing!

Yes, amazing. Amazing for those of us who support the materialist explanation of history; yet completely natural for the author of the letter who views history from the point of view of idealism. In his opinion, understanding the interest of the present moment means above all understanding 'that active psychic base which acts as the motive force of the masses'. Whereas we start with the economy, he starts with psychology. The content of our message is defined by economic and social relations, which we strive to explain to the working class. But among those people who adopt the point of view of the author of the letter, the content of propaganda is defined, as he says himself, by interests of which the workers are already conscious. Showing the way on the basis of these interests is – again, according to his expression – the only task of the Social Democracy. From this he draws the entirely logical conclusion that it is not appropriate 'to speak now, to propagandise the overthrow of the autocracy to the workers'. He starts to speak about it only when the masses themselves are already filled with hatred for the autocracy. He does not want to knock on closed hearts because this means 'not finding the wished-for response in them'. He will start to knock on them only when they are open.

The reader will ask, perhaps: but why knock on these hearts when they are already open? And does it not follow from the words of the author of the letter that the 'only' task of Social Democracy consists, as the saying goes, in

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18 Citing from memory [Plekhanov's footnote].

breaking down an open door? To this I answer that indeed, this is precisely what follows from the words of the author of the letter. His idealism leads him to a dead end.

If we recommended the activity he recommends to us as our 'only' task, we ourselves would declare that we did not wish to assist the development of the self-awareness of the proletariat, and that would amount to a rejection of the most important historical mission of the Social Democracy. The idea of such a refusal has always been uncommonly far from the minds of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. From this comes their antagonism with the author of the letter and his co-thinkers.

However – and in order to be fair in our dealings with the idealists – I should note that idealism, though it undoubtedly represents a much less firm basis for revolutionary conclusions than materialism, nonetheless does not always lead its supporters to the 'cold water' characteristic of the author of the letter now being examined. The French idealists of the eighteenth century were convinced revolutionaries. They did not fear knocking on closed hearts and managed to open them with their inspiring words. If the author of the letter is conservative, then the main guilt lies in the fact that he is not only an idealist, but is in addition an idealist adulterated by Marxism.

He heard that, according to the theory of Marx, great social interests lie at the basis of great social movements. He knew that, according to that same theory, the only propaganda that has a chance of success among people of a given class is that which expresses the interests of that class and which relies upon it. But he could not explain how this understanding should be connected with the word 'interest'. He identified interest with a definite state of consciousness. He decided that interests 'are generated', not by factual relations of people in the social process of production, but by human consciousness. In short, he attached a completely idealistic interpretation to this word. And seeing that he wanted to stand on a 'scientific' basis come what may, he also started to speak about an 'active-psychic base' as that limit which Social Democracy should not overstep if it does not want to be turned into a party of utopians. But this base in present-day Russia is extremely low: the Russian working masses still do not understand the necessity of struggle with the autocracy; thus the author censures every idea about the overthrow of the autocracy. As I noted earlier, he only permits us to attack the autocracy in our writing once the autocracy has lost all prestige in the eyes of the people, that is, when our attacks on it become completely superfluous to requirement.

At the time of the meeting between Moses and Jehovah on Mount Sinai, the quarrelsome Jewish God stood, as is well-known, with his back to his faithful

servant so that the honourable leader of Israel saw only 'his posterior'.<sup>19</sup> Our advocates of the 'economic' tendency are similar to Moses in this respect: they see only the 'posterior' of our proletariat. But Moses contemplated God's 'posterior' because that is what pleased his despotic sovereign, whilst our 'Economists' contemplate the posterior of the working class for the reason that it happens to please themselves. And they become quite irritated when the proletariat turns the other side of their body towards them.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, *de gustibus non est disputandum*,<sup>21</sup> but it is a sufficiently strange taste, all the same, that is being 'generated' among the idealists made 'sophisticated' by Marxism.

The author of the letter says that he does not take the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* 'as gospel'. He insists on the necessity of revising the views expressed in it. In short, he is one of the many 'critics' of Marx. We have seen where this criticism leads: the historical idealism of the eighteenth century made sophisticated with badly-understood Marxism. Similar oddities often occur these days among Messrs the critics of Marx: they shout about the necessity of going forward whilst in reality creeping backwards like a crab. And this is why a necessary condition for the further development of European revolutionary thought appears to be, at the present time, criticism of Messrs the critics.

Comrade K-v (Kol'tsov) said in his pamphlet on the Law of 2 June<sup>22</sup> that the tsarist government cannot care about the interests of the workers, and that it must perish so that the workers might live. The author of the letter objects

19 *Exodus* Ch. 33: vv. 20–23. The story of this meeting is in fact notoriously contradictory – elsewhere there is reference to God speaking to Moses 'face to face'.

20 Here is an example. In the first issue of *Rabochee Delo* (p. 79) we read: 'In the middle of December, a leaflet was distributed at the Maxwell and Pal factories over the signature of the "Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class" in which the workers' demands were formulated... Completely by chance, two political demands presented by the workers – the freedom to strike and the freedom to hold meetings – were not included in the leaflet. These demands were stated in a list put together by the workers themselves... and the circumstances which caused them to not show up in the appeal left them highly dissatisfied'. Do you understand, dear reader, the idea behind this 'completely by chance', thanks to which political demands were removed from a list of workers' demands? The intellectuals to whom the list was given removed from it whatever did not correspond to the 'active-psyhic base'. The intellectuals turned into censors who would not 'permit' certain tendencies. And the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* 'does not know' anything. That is a real pity! [Plekhanov's footnote].

21 'There is no accounting for taste' (Latin).

22 Kol'tsov 1897. This pamphlet deals with the law limiting the length of the working day in mills and factories, which Nicholas II enacted in response to the several mass strikes and strike waves during the preceding years.

that not one government in the West helps workers defend their own interests and that, on the contrary, every one of them prevents the workers from doing this. 'Why then the focus on absolutism?' he asks with undisguised irony. I am not going to dwell on this objection, which represents only a pale copy of the old reasoning of the Bakuninists, who were convinced that a 'bourgeois constitution' never brought any benefit to the working class. I am sure that the readers themselves know the weak side of this reasoning. But it does not hurt to note that Bakuninism represented one of the various types of idealism, made sophisticated by Marxism.<sup>23</sup>

I will equally not even begin to examine the view of the author that 'in Russia, it is impossible to expect anything from a constitution'. This is the same thing as Bakuninism.

I now want to draw the attention of the reader to that place in the letter which states that in our Social-Democratic literature, the collection of facts and the explanation of them corresponds to the main task: the present struggle, the possible struggle, whereas 'the propaganda of the future, of socialism and such like (!) can for the present only serve to attract individuals'. We will now see what sort of conclusions people who hold these views arrive at.

The third document in our collection is a letter of Mr. G.,<sup>24</sup> one of the current pillars of the 'Union of Russian Social Democrats'. It was written at about

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23 See my pamphlet, 'Anarchismus und Sozialismus', Berlin 1894 (Plekhanov 1894) [Plekhanov's footnote].

24 'Mr. G.' was Zemah Koppelson (1869–1933), a Bund activist originally from Vilno, where he had been politically active in the early 1890s, along with Martov and Arkady Kremer. Together they appear to have influenced the local Jewish labour movement in the direction of integration with the ethnic Russian movement and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, whilst opposing perceived Polish and Lithuanian separatism within the Social-Democratic movement. One consequence of their activity was the creation of the Jewish Bund in 1897, which declared its solidarity with the Union of Russian Social Democrats – at this stage a Plekhanovite-dominated organisation – and which helped set up the RSDLP the following year. Subsequently, Koppelson emigrated, helping form the Foreign Committee of the Bund and serving as secretary to the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad following the conquest of the organisation by the *Rabochee Delo* faction. During this time he stayed in Berlin, where he was close to Prokopovich and Kuskova for a time, and appears to have been occupied with transporting illegal literature into Russia.

In the 'Economist' controversy, Koppelson's role was an unfortunate one as he appears to have tried unsuccessfully to mediate between, and unify, the two extremes represented by Plekhanov on the one hand and Prokopovich and Kuskova on the other. The documents of the *Vademecum* show very clearly his friendly attitude towards Prokopovich but at the same time he appears to have assisted Plekhanov in drafting the demands placed on the



the same time as the letter I have just been examining, in the spring of 1898, and was sent to the Editorial Board of *Rabotnik* for the latter's edification. Mr. G. belonged at that time to the group that was mentioned in the previous letter.<sup>25</sup> In his epistle, he sets out the views of one Mr. N.N.,<sup>26</sup> one of the authors of the pamphlet against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group that is included in our collection. He considers this Mr. N.N. 'an individual notable for the originality of his thought and his skill in relating critically to all revolutionary traditions and opinions'.

He points to the view of Mr. N.N. that it is 'utopian and childish' not only to speak of the seizure of political power by the proletariat, but also 'to put the socialisation of the instruments of labour (*sic!*) into the programme'. Having clarified this truly notable opinion, Mr. G. adds that for Mr. N.N. 'there is still a question' of whether or not we can speak of the abolition of capitalist exploitation. Mr. G. is also convinced – from the words of Mr. N.N. and in spite of generally known facts – that all the efforts of the Belgian Party to direct workers to broad political struggle have been absolutely smashed. From all this, according to the Mr. G., Mr. N.N. draws the conclusion that 'talking to the working masses in Russia about the abolition of capitalism, about socialism and about the abolition of the autocracy is, generally speaking, absurd'.

All these are, without doubt, highly 'notable' opinions. How does Mr. G. himself view them? In one place in his letter he notes that the road of criticism is extraordinarily rewarding for such a notable person as Mr. N.N., and at the same time a very slippery one. But he nowhere decisively expresses

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Union Abroad's leadership in September 1899, discussed in the commentary to the present document (see Plekhanov and Aksel'rod 1967, pp. 94–5). He also appears to have been instrumental in encouraging Lenin, Martov and Potresov to accept nominations to serve as editors of a re-established *Rabochaia Gazeta* at the beginning of 1900 and yet – despite this positive work – ends up a victim of Plekhanov's polemical ire in the *Vademecum*, seemingly because the latter viewed his unifying attempts as duplicitous on the grounds that they involved the issuing of political statements that were inconsistent with one another.

25 The Berlin section of the Union Abroad.

26 'Mr. N.N.' was Sergei Nikolaevich Prokopovich (1871–1955), Kuskova's husband from 1895. Prokopovich was drawn to Marxism in 1894, having previously been involved in Populism and the short-lived bourgeois-democratic 'People's Justice' Party. He came to support the revisionists during a period spent abroad in Belgium and Germany (1895–9) and his subsequent political development closely mirrored that of his wife. In October 1917 he was a minister in the Kerensky cabinet and he narrowly escaped capture in the Winter Palace, subsequently playing a visible role in some of the earliest demonstrations against the Bolshevik seizure of power.

the conviction that Mr. N.N. has already slipped. On the contrary, he ardently defends his doctrine. And it is clear from the other letter of this same Mr. G. that he did not in the least break with Mr. N.N. because the latter described the idea of struggle with the autocracy and with capitalism as 'absurd'.

This other letter of Mr. G. represents the fourth document in our collection. Like the first letter, it does not have a date. But it is not hard to define the period it relates to from its contents. In it, Mr. G. speaks about the appearance of what was then being called the Russian<sup>27</sup> Social-Democratic Party. Consequently it was written after this appearance. As the Party appeared in the spring of 1898, Mr. G.'s letter could not have been written earlier than this date. From this letter, it is clear the Mr. G. is one of those current pillars of the 'USRD' who took a highly sceptical attitude to the Russian Parties, regardless of how their national limits are defined.<sup>28</sup> He even doubted whether the appearance of these parties could be termed a progressive phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> After this it is unsurprising that he was among those who refused to declare their solidarity with the Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Party<sup>30</sup> at the Congress of the Social Democrats.<sup>31</sup>

Further on in this second letter of Mr. G., a passage where 'a new apostle' is spoken of draws attention to itself. This new apostle is none other than the 'notable' N.N., known to us from the first letter of Mr. G. This Mr. N.N. is as 'dear' to him, Mr. G., 'as before'. Mr. G. 'somewhat' disagrees with him 'on the question

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27 *Russkii* in the original. The adjective '*russkii*' refers to the Russian ethnicity, which is distinct from the Jewish, Ukrainian, Caucasian and other ethnicities, whereas '*rossiiskoi*' usually refers to the entire Russian state, its land and all the people living on it. The RSDLP eventually decided to use the latter, no doubt owing to the affiliation of the Jewish Bund to it at its First Congress in March 1898.

28 Here the original reads: '*ochen' skepticheski otnocil'cia kak k 'russkoi' tak i k rossiiskoi sotsial-demokraticheskoi partii*'. Therefore, Plekhanov is probably suggesting that Mr. G. had opposed not only the formation of the 'multi-ethnic' RSDLP but also the formation of any ethnically separate Russian organisation which would not have incorporated the Bund, owing to the undeveloped state of the ethnically Russian workers' movement.

29 As is well known, they quickly merged into one [Plekhanov's footnote]. This refers to the Bund affiliating to the RSDLP in March 1898 after just a few months of independent existence.

30 Perhaps Mr. G. will say that this is not accurate? Axelrod has documents with the help of which I can irrefutably prove my words. Does Mr. G. want this? [Plekhanov's footnote].

31 This refers to the First Congress of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad – the émigré section of the RSDLP – which was held in October 1898. It should not be confused with the First Congress of the RSDLP which was held in March of the same year in Minsk.

of the necessity of including organisational principles in programmes', but as for the rest, a 'complete' and touching agreement reigns between them.

From this it follows that Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, in the spring of 1898, following the appearance of the Russian Social-Democratic Party,<sup>32</sup> was of one opinion with a person who was convinced that it was absurd to speak to the working masses of Russia about the overthrow of the autocracy, about socialism and even about the abolition of capitalism.

The negative attitude to 'ideas' about the abolition of capitalism is completely comprehensible to a Mr. G., who is 'entirely in agreement' with the Mr. N.N. who thought it 'utopian and childish to put the socialisation of the instruments of labour into our programme'.

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* 'does not know' anything about this. Poor things!

Mr. G. is now trying to convince everybody that there were never any principled disagreements between himself and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Judge his truthfulness for yourself, reader. And Mr. G. was not only 'entirely in agreement' with Mr. N.N. in 1898.

Whilst I was writing these lines, the question of the exclusion of Mr. N.N. from the Party came up, on the grounds that he is a person who completely rejects the view of Social Democracy and who in his rejection goes even further than the notorious 'renegade' Bernstein. My suggestion provoked a heated protest on the part of our 'youngsters', who declared that they considered him, and would continue to consider him, their comrade. At the same time they assured us that Mr. Bernstein was a 'great phenomenon' more deserving of complete sympathy than censure.<sup>33</sup>

In view of this opposition, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group renounced the idea of excluding Mr. N.N., who for his part promised to set out his opinions in a special pamphlet.

This pamphlet represents the fifth document in our collection. It was brought to Geneva and triumphantly presented to me by Mr. G., with the insistent demand from all the 'young' comrades that it be printed. I promised to send it to press immediately, having added that I would print an answer to it following its publication. If I am not mistaken, comrade B. had already set about typesetting Mr. N.N.'s polemical work when a new demand was suddenly and insistently issued by the young comrades, this time of a completely

32 For some reason, Plekhanov fails to use the official title the new Party chose for itself and once again *russkii* is used.

33 An echo of this feeling towards the 'great phenomenon' reached Bernstein himself, who hints at it in his well-known pamphlet [Plekhanov's footnote].

opposite character: they demanded that we stopped the printing of the pamphlet. But do not think, dear reader, that the reason for this sudden change of mind was an equally sudden change in the ideas of our 'Economist' comrades. The psychological impossibility of such changes in the minds of people who, though calling themselves young, have already long since outgrown youth, spoke against this possibility, along with a number of other considerations.

First of all, the second letter of Mr. G., which was written after the negotiations about the printing of the pamphlet, clearly gave testimony to the fact that 'we' disagreed with these gentlemen only on the question of 'organisational principles'; as for the rest, 'we' were totally in agreement.

Secondly, at the Congress, our 'young' comrades refused, as is well-known, to adopt the point of view of the *Manifesto* of the Russian Social-Democratic Party.<sup>34</sup> This showed that they continued to adhere to the 'economic' tendency, the main and most consistent exponent of which was Mr. N.N.

Thirdly, in one of their notices, printed in the ninth and tenth issues of *Listok Rabotnika* following the Congress,<sup>35</sup> Mr. V. I—n,<sup>36</sup> one of the current editors of *Rabochee Delo*, attacked 'revolutionaries' who allegedly 'considered it an absolute truth – and who even now have not ceased to think – that a class movement of the workers under current political conditions is impossible in Russia'.

In the word of Mr. V. I—n, these 'revolutionaries' viewed the working masses only as a most revolutionary means and aimed to extract the main forces for their struggle with the autocracy from them. From the workers themselves 'they only wanted to make conscious fighters for general-democratic ideals and they did not in the least want to "narrow" their activity by organising the workers for a fight with the bosses and by active participation in strikes'.

What sort of revolutionaries is Mr. V. I—n, one of the current editors of *Rabochee Delo*, talking about? Naturally, the idea does not even enter the head of the reader familiar with the literary activity of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and with the revolutionary past of its members that the subject

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34 Once again, this refers to the First Congress of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad.

35 *Listok Rabotnika* was the agitational 'supplement' to *Rabotnik*, the journal of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad from 1895–8. It was edited by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group until the Union Abroad's First Congress, when an alternative Editorial Board – one more sympathetic to 'Economism' – was elected. This new board produced No. 9–10 of the *Listok* (as one double issue) before disbanding it and its parent publication. *Rabochee Delo* and *Listok Rabocheho Dela* were subsequently launched as replacements.

36 Vladimir Ivanshin, also an editor of *Rabochaia Mysl'*.

of the passage is precisely this group.<sup>37</sup> But, having read Mr. N.N.'s pamphlet, he will see that Mr. V. I—n, one of the current editors of *Rabochee Delo*, only repeats the accusations lavished upon us in this work. It seems that as early as November 1898 (at the time of the publication of the 9th and 10th issues of *Listok Rabotnika*), Mr. V. I—n, one of the current editors of *Rabochee Delo*, completely approved of Mr. N.N.'s negative attitude towards the programme and the activity of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. It is clear that it was not this negative attitude that would compel Mr. V. I—n to speak out against the publication of Mr. N.N.'s pamphlet.

But the aforementioned article of Mr. V. I—n, one of the current editors of *Rabochee Delo*, was not the expression of his personal opinions on the programme and the activity of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. The very same 'young comrades' who first of all demanded that we print Mr. N.N.'s pamphlet, and then took back their demand, approved of this article. From this it is clear to us that the sudden reversal of the decision was not in the least provoked by doubts as to the basis of Mr. N.N.'s attack on the advocates of political agitation.

What is all this really about?

Very simply, it is about the consistency of Mr. N.N. and the inconsistency of the other 'Economist' comrades. Remaining true to his fundamental views (which are identical to the opinions of Mr. M.M., the author of the letter to Axelrod examined above), Mr. N.N. all the more leans towards the rejection of all illegal activity. The creation of 'peaceful' (that is, legal) workers' organisations has gradually become the central point of his programme.

'Every type of organisation is important', he says in his pamphlet, 'but peaceful organisations are especially important'.

From his point of view this is entirely logical. But, given that logicity cannot be termed the most important distinguishing feature in the mode of thinking of our 'young' (alias 'economic') comrades, they also refused to recognise the conclusions that were inevitably drawn from these premises. A split occurred, which Mr. G. spoke about in his second letter.<sup>38</sup> But as we already know, this

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37 Passing over other examples of our work, I point to my pamphlet *On the Tasks of Socialists in the Fight against Famine in Russia* (Plekhanov 1892) in which I, objecting to our opponent, argued in great detail that the workers' movement was not only possible, but had already started in contemporary Russia, and that our Party could not limit itself to 'general-democratic ideals'. Of course, everyone has the right to not know what he is talking about, but Mr. V. I—n is abusing this right [Plekhanov's footnote].

38 'We part from him somewhat (sic) on the matter of including organisational principles in programmes, in the sense of the organisation of all kinds of societies. Not rejecting this in principle, we consider that he does not know the living conditions of the Russian proletariat sufficiently well' [Plekhanov's footnote].

split does not prevent Mr. G. – one of the current pillars of the URSD – and his co-thinkers from agreeing with Mr. N.N. ‘in every other respect’.

Thus the ‘young comrades’ decided not to print Mr. N.N.’s pamphlet only because they could not approve of his view on the significance of peaceful organisations. His attack on the advocates of political agitation did not cease to appear entirely justified to them.

What does the essence of this attack consist in? Mr. N.N. identified the political struggle recommended by the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group with conspiratorial and terrorist activity and argues that such activity had no basis in contemporary Russia. Not having any understanding either of the history of our revolutionary movement or of the conditions under which their own Party arose, the ‘young comrades’ did not notice this exaggerated distortion and grew embittered at the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group, which had up that point been obliged to listen to accusations of an entirely opposite character. Of course this was all affectingly naive, but we had to stand by our programme and we did not consider it possible to limit ourselves to the good-naturedly mocking exclamations of a goose. The ‘young comrades’ considered themselves representatives of a new tendency in Russian Social Democracy and, apart from this, we saw in this alleged tendency neither socialism nor democratism. And the more clearly we saw this, the more pressing became the necessity of deciding what we were to do. However, more about this below: right now I would like to speak about Mr. N.N.’s pamphlet.

Mr. N.N. thinks that political agitation will only be opportune when ‘the workers themselves, of their own volition and without the revolutionary bacillus of the intelligentsia, begin to struggle with the autocracy’.

And prior to the onset of this time he advises us to avoid people who occupy themselves with political agitation just as assiduously as we now avoid *agents provocateurs*. I will not debate this opinion as I do not want to offend readers infected with revolutionary bacillus. I will limit myself to a fresh indication of the fundamental logical condition for the appearance of such opinions. This condition consists in the complete failure to understand the materialistic view of history, on the basis of which Mr. N.N. would like to construct his ‘scientific’ programme. Mr. N.N. repeats the mistake which I pointed out in my analysis of the first letter. ‘The totality of social relations’, he says, ‘defines the interests the workers can have, but does not define which interests are already known by the workers and have come into their lives’.

This is very confused: how has all this come into life? Pay rises, naturally, have great ‘interest’ for workers, and they are very well understood by all of them in general and each one of them in particular. But did this interest come into their lives? I do not know. To speak frankly, I do know that it is a completely

‘absurd’ question. If it has a meaning for Mr. N.N. then it is only because this gentleman has not yet digested the concept of ‘interest’. Later, his exposition confirms this in a way that could not be improved upon.

‘With the help of social experience and everyday practice’, we read in this pamphlet, ‘the consciousness of the working masses is permanently catching up with real social relations, never being identical with them’.

Why write this? Do any of the opponents of Mr. N.N. really assert that the consciousness of the masses can ‘be identified’ with real social relations? None of them has ever asserted this. Why does Mr. N.N. try to persuade them that the given ‘identification’ is impossible in reality? Only because he does not notice the logical impossibility of such an ‘identification’. That is a bad sign.

Mr. N.N. wants to say that the consciousness of the masses always lags behind the development of social relations. This is correct to a greater or lesser degree. But the only logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that the ‘revolutionary bacillus’ (no matter whether it comes from the intelligentsia or the workers) should ensure with all the means at their disposal that the consciousness of workers lags as little as possible behind the real relations of a given society. You see, the task of this bacillus consists in precisely this: furthering the development of the self-awareness of the proletariat. But the ‘notable’ Mr. N.N. reasons otherwise: ‘Therefore (!)’ he says, ‘it is necessary to draw such a decisive and fundamental distinction between the interests that “we” (the intelligentsia) ascribe to the workers and the interests genuinely belonging to them’.

Now look at the result we have. Earlier we had, first of all, the real interests of the workers, defined by the entire totality of social relations, and secondly, we had more or less clear and complete consciousness on the part of the workers of these real interests. Now we have got, first of all, the interests ascribed to workers by us (the intelligentsia) and, secondly, the interests genuinely belonging to workers. What exactly are the distinguishing signs of the latter type of interests? The fact that the workers are conscious of them. Does that mean that only those interests of which the workers are conscious are real? It turns out that the answer to this is ‘yes’. But you realise that this same Mr. N.N. told us (though using very unfortunate expressions) that the consciousness of workers lagged behind the development of social relations! Does it not really follow from this that workers can have interests that they still do not understand? Of course it does. Make your mind up! Mr. N.N. has forgotten his own position and, imperceptibly to himself, ‘identifies’ the consciousness of workers with their real interests. Thanks to this somewhat inopportune forgetfulness, he jumps with one bound from the point of view of Marx, which he wanted to take as the basis for all his reasoning, to the point of view of idealism, which sees in consciousness the final cause, more deeply lying than all others, of



historical change. After this leap, his next arguments are entirely unsurprising: 'As it is dependent on conditions of time and place, the development of the masses' consciousness makes all attempts to force the natural course of the workers' movement fruitless'.

And then: 'the question is not one of whether it (the Russian workers' movement) has a profusion of political tasks under the current system of Russian life, but one of the degree of its development at which these tasks can be introduced into its programme and perhaps be realised, in other words, of when the material forces in it required for the solving of them will ripen'.

Because tsarism still does not provoke hatred in the working masses, and because we do not therefore have the material forces necessary for its overthrow, Mr. N.N. thinks that to attack it now is senseless (and in this Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, is – as we know – 'entirely in agreement' with him). The matter presents itself differently from the point of view of the materialist understanding of history: from this point of view, the 'revolutionary bacillus' is obliged to develop the revolutionary self-awareness of the working class, and this development is characterised by the fact that the working class all the more clearly, all the more broadly and all the more profoundly understands its interests, which are in the last analysis created by the economy of contemporary society. In this case, the activity of the 'revolutionary bacillus' only has meaning if it promotes a speeding up of this process. And since we want to promote this speeding up, we not only can but should turn the conversation to those interests of which the workers are still not conscious.

However, it is important to remember that Mr. N.N. inclines towards legal activity and that he is not at all favourably disposed towards the 'revolutionary bacillus', which seems to him to be an entirely superfluous element in historical change. Just like the author of the letter to Axelrod which we examined previously, Mr. N.N. is an idealist made sophisticated by Marxism, and in our era (this was not the case at the time of Bakunin) idealists of this sort look upon revolutionaries with the cold disdain of pedants.

We will not forget, however, that there are certain mitigating facts connected to our author. These facts consist in the many contradictions in his pamphlet, which show that at the time of its writing he was not yet a totally dried-out pedant.

The greatest of these contradictions consists in the following: on the one hand, Mr. N.N. wishes us to wait until the workers 'of their own will, without the revolutionary bacillus of the intelligentsia' start to fight the autocracy; on the other hand, he recognises (not with any felicity was he made sophisticated by Marxism) that we should conduct propaganda among the working masses that would help them 'investigate their surroundings (and) existing relations'.

He himself recognises this contradiction and tries to escape it with the help of a distinction between propaganda on the one hand and agitation on the other.

Propaganda is only one of the factors developing the workers' consciousness of their interests; this consciousness naturally develops not just in response to propaganda, but mainly as a result of the individual life experience of the worker. The consciousness of workers is not dough that we (the intelligentsia) are called upon to fashion in our own likeness. 'We' and 'our' forces can only complete that which life teaches the worker.

Propaganda is only one of the factors developing the consciousness of the workers – this we already knew when Mr. N.N. 'went around with a slit in his aft-sail', to use a nautical expression.<sup>39</sup> We have known for a long time that the workers' consciousness is not dough. But that is not what is in question. We need to decide what the content of propaganda should be, to decide whether the propagandist can point out to the workers those interests of their class which have not yet been noticed, understood, or recognised by them. Mr. N.N. himself acknowledges that this is possible. And this deprives his entire argument on the theme of not including in our programme those interests of the working class not yet recognised by the working class of any sense. When we speak of propaganda, is it not also a question of 'programme'? The opposition of agitation to propaganda does not in the least relieve the difficult situation of Mr. N.N., as is extremely clear from the following:

Conversely (he continues), with agitation we start from needs already existing among the individuals who are being agitated (*sic*), from interests which are already recognised and which are already being sensed (*sic*) by them. The role of the agitator does not amount to proving that the position of a given individual can be improved; this is the business of a propagandist. The business of an agitator is to point out ways and means to somebody who already knows what he needs. The agitator uses the discontent existing in the masses and points out the practical means of obtaining the wished-for goal to them. The agitator, so to speak, gives a definite form to existing discontent or to protest that has already broken out.

The agitator should give a definite form to protest that has already broken out. Very well. But will he be able to do this without exerting influence on the

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39 Plekhanov is making a rather coarse reference to early infancy.

workers' consciousness? Of course not. That means that in relation to agitation too, the 'revolutionary bacillus' is obliged to do that very thing that their historical calling consists in: developing the workers' self-awareness. In this sense there exists no distinction between propaganda and agitation.

The agitator should point out ways and means. This is better still. But I will ask once again whether he can do this without exerting influence on the workers' consciousness. Should he speak only of those ways and means that are already known to workers? This would be pointless. If he spoke only of these, his efforts would be superfluous and he would be playing the role of the celebrated fifth wheel on the wagon. The agitator can and should speak of those ways and means that are still unknown to workers. But in this case it is incomprehensible why he should wait until the workers start to hate absolutism 'of their own volition' and start to fight it. Does the victory over absolutism not number among the ways and means for protecting some very important interests of the working class?

In the opinion of Mr. N.N., the job of an agitator consists in pointing out ways and means to somebody who already knows what he requires. Let us allow the truth of this statement. But, it is asked, what exactly does the Russian worker require? The improvement of his economic situation. Is this known to him? It is. And what is not known to him? He does not know that the conquest of political rights represents one of the most important ways and means of struggle for the economic interests of every member of his class. This means that the agitator should explain this to him, and should not wait until it becomes comprehensible to workers 'of their own volition'. Mr. N.N. proves precisely that point that he wants to refute.

This said, Mr. N.N. and Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD who agrees with him, both allow that in certain localities inside Russia one can, and should, point out the necessity of winning some political rights to the worker. Only they do not want agitators to talk about struggle with the autocracy. Yet, firstly, with this recognition they themselves completely erase that line of demarcation which they draw between agitation and propaganda and, secondly, can one speak about the conquest of political rights without touching on the question of our current political system? It seems that we cannot; it seems that this is completely impossible. And if it is impossible, then the agitator should not abandon his attacks on the autocracy and cannot wait until the workers, 'of their own volition', enter into struggle with tsarism.

For historical reasons, an examination of which goes completely beyond the framework of this preface, the working population of Russia habitually imagine the tsar to be something of the order of a people's tribune. They think that the tsar defends their interests from infringements by all the higher estates. In consequence of this deeply-rooted prejudice, the peasant and even the worker

masses have a tendency to be mistrustful towards people who rebel against the tsar. Therefore, and only because of this, we need to approach the question of tsarism with caution. We have to use special methods here. The most successful of them has always proved to be, and will always prove to be, a method I would term 'Socratic'. Socrates was 'the obstetrician of thought'. He himself never gave expression to a particular thought, but made his interlocutor formulate it as the inevitable conclusion of their own premises. His conviction was gradually and imperceptibly communicated to his listeners. We too should act in this manner. This method is suggested to us both by the historical prejudices of our people and by freedom of expression's complete absence in our country. But, first of all, not only the agitator, but also the propagandist must stick to this method and, secondly, sticking to the Socratic method in political agitation does not mean rejecting this agitation, as is the case with Mr. N.N., the author of the pamphlet against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, and Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD.<sup>40</sup>

Mr. N.N. and Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD who agrees with him, accuse the 'Emancipation of Labour' group of calling the workers pretty much directly to the barricades and, in the expression of Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, of wanting to take the autocracy by storm. This is a foolish accusation. In order to disprove it, it is only necessary to point to our publications. But seeing as several 'young comrades' clearly do not want to take the trouble of familiarising themselves with these, I will now present the following passage from my pamphlet *On the Tasks of Socialists in the Struggle with Famine in Russia*:

The job of an agitator consists in releasing into circulation the greatest number of revolutionary ideas accessible to the masses in a given situation. For every mistake in one direction the other, the agitator can expect harsh punishment. If he overestimates the revolutionary mood of the masses, he at best remains misunderstood and maybe he will be laughed at, maybe even beaten up. On the other hand, if owing to an excess of caution he puts demands before the masses that they have already outgrown in the course of their revolutionary development, he ends up in the absurd situation of an agitator-brake, an agitator inspiring the crowd

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40 The method indicated was already being practised by the insurrectionary Populists of the 1870s. See the account in my pamphlet, *The Russian Worker in the Revolutionary Movement*, about how they broke the workers' faith in the tsar at the time of the strike on the Obvodnii Canal (Plekhanov 1902) [Plekhanov's footnote]. See also Plekhanov 1924-7, Vol. 3, pp. 121-205.

with 'moderation and orderliness'. The deftness of the agitator consists in an ability to avoid these extremes.<sup>41</sup>

As the reader can see, I do not belong to those people who approve and recommend agitation using the Nezhdanov method ('Forward! We will die for freedom!'). But neither I, nor Axelrod, nor any of my close friends and comrades were ever able to understand the bias of the 'economic comrades' towards agitation carefully cleansed of all political adulteration. We were also never able to understand the juxtaposing of agitation to propaganda, as Mr. N.N. loves to do along with Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD who fully agrees with him.

I have always thought that the difference between propaganda and agitation consisted in the fact that 'the propagandist transmits many ideas to one individual or a few individuals, whilst the agitator transmits one or just a few ideas, but to make up for it transmits them to a whole mass of people, sometimes almost the entire population of a given locality'.<sup>42</sup>

However great this difference, it does not in the least prevent our agitators from disseminating political ideas among the masses right now.

The idea that agitation should rely on the immediate economic needs of the working class is a correct one, but hardly a new one. This was known even to the insurrectionary Populists. The pamphlet, *The Russian Worker in the Revolutionary Movement*, was written by me with the aim of reminding young Russian Social Democrats about the methods of agitation on an economic basis that had been worked out in practice during the Populist period of our movement. We are not against agitation on an economic basis, but are against those agitators who do not know how to make use of clashes between the workers and the bosses for the development of the political consciousness of the producers.

Axelrod said in his pamphlet, *On the Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social Democrats*,<sup>43</sup> that the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group represented an answer to the question of where to obtain forces for a renewal of the struggle with the autocracy and of how to lead this struggle with greatest chances of success. In this connection, Mr. N.N., entirely in agreement with Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, insinuates that our programme's centre of gravity lies beyond the interests of the working class. This insinuation had some degree of success among people not strong in the art of thinking and

41 Plekhanov 1892 [Plekhanov's footnote]. See also Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 105, where an alternative translation of this passage is given.

42 'On the tasks of the Socialists etc.', p. 58 [Plekhanov's footnote].

43 See Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 227–41 for an English translation of this pamphlet.

little familiar with our socialist literature. Up to now, it has been possible to not infrequently meet with simpletons who are convinced by the words of Mr. N.N. and the entirely sympathetic Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, and who say that we look on the proletariat as a tool for the attainment by the revolutionary intelligentsia of their own goals, which are alien to the workers. This requires something of an explanation on my part.

Axelrod is correct. When we wrote our programme, we wanted to point out to our revolutionaries, who had just experienced a crushing defeat, the only road which could lead them to victory. We remained true to the glorious traditions of our revolutionary movement. We are proud of it and always will be proud of it, however much this irritates narrow-minded pedants and political castrates made sophisticated by Marxism.

We drew the attention of our revolutionaries to the working class as the only force capable of bringing down tsarism.

'The Russian revolutionary movement will triumph as a workers' movement or it will not triumph at all', was what I said at the Paris International Socialist Congress of 1889. We always tried to highlight the revolutionary mission of the proletariat in Russia. We are proud of this and always will be proud, however much political castrates and narrow-minded pedants reproach us for it.

But in our eyes, the workers were never a mere tool for obtaining goals alien to them. This is slander, dreamt up in the hope that ignorant and backward people capable of believing it can be found everywhere. Our programme is written in the spirit of Marx. And a programme which is written in the spirit of such a person cannot be the programme of political exploiters.

The first publication of our group was my pamphlet, *Socialism and Political Struggle*,<sup>44</sup> in which I, whilst refuting Populist prejudices against 'politics', also argued that the political struggle of the Russian revolutionaries should be the class struggle of the proletariat. Since the publication of this pamphlet, it is possible to say that not a single member of our group has written a single article that was not guided directly or indirectly by that very same thought. In *Our Disagreements*, I took the bull by the horns and asked directly, who is 'important' for what: the workers for the revolution or the revolution for the workers?<sup>45</sup> Is it necessary to recall how I answered this question? I argued that the workers 'should make their own revolution by themselves'.<sup>46</sup> Do people say this when they regard the workers as cannon fodder, and do those that regard them as such say this?

44 Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 49–66.

45 Plekhanov 1885, p. 251 [Plekhanov's footnote].

46 Plekhanov 1885, p. 252 [Plekhanov's footnote].

The 'critical' methods of Mr. N.N. are best of all characterised by the following rearrangement. Axelrod's article, 'The Political Role of Social Democracy in the Recent Elections to the German Reichstag', was printed in the fourth issue of our *Sotsial-Demokrat*.<sup>47</sup> Whilst refuting various reproaches which were then raining down on our German comrades, Axelrod touched on the reproach that they assiduously and consciously avoided any open clashes with the government. This reproach always produced a very strong impression on the Russian revolutionary 'intelligentsia'. Therefore Axelrod considered it necessary to remind his readers that the political system in Germany, which is consciously supported by a vast section of society, is much more stable than the Russian regime, which is mainly built upon the political passivity of the Russian people, and that tactics useful and necessary in Russia would prove to be out of place and harmful in Germany. Mr. N.N. seizes on one phrase from one footnote in Axelrod's article and, on the basis of this, argues that Axelrod wants to bring down Russian tsarism with the help of a military assault. In order to highlight his 'cold wateriness', Mr. N.N. contends – as if to contradict Axelrod – that 'the workers movement is a mass movement which cannot be packed into the confines of a plot or a conspiracy'.

Of course, Mr. N.N. cannot seriously think that this is unknown to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. But he reckoned on the simpletons and his reckoning was justified. The simpletons indeed believed that Mr. N.N. was saying something new. Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, belonged to their number.

Incidentally, whilst the 'economic' comrades accused our group of similar 'impossibilities', we fought with Mr. N.N. and his co-thinkers because we saw in them such people as will sooner or later – if only so as to not give up their 'economic' premises – arrive at a view of the workers as nothing more than a tool for achieving the goals of the liberal bourgeoisie. Our prediction came to pass earlier than we had expected.

The authors of the *Credo* only recommend economic struggle to the working class, saying that political struggle on its part is impossible under Russian conditions and that 'talk of an independent working class political Party is in essence nothing more than the consequence of transferring alien tasks and alien results onto our soil'.

At the same time, these same gentlemen recommend participation in 'radical or liberal-oppositional activity of all other, non-working class sections of the population' to Russian Marxists.

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47 *Sotsial-Demokrat* was a collection of theoretical articles edited by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group from 1890–2. Four volumes were published in total.



In the absence of an independent workers' political party, such participation will of necessity be turned into a simple merger with the radical or the liberal bourgeoisie.

The radical and liberal bourgeois of Western Europe has for a long time asserted that there is no need for the workers to unite into a special political party: this is the first article in any declaration of faith given to the workers by the radical and liberal bourgeoisie. But the desire to foist this declaration of faith onto the workers only signifies the wish of the bourgeoisie to exploit the workers in politics. In this way, the appearance of the *Credo* is nothing more than an attempt to 'transfer' those sermons with the help of which the radical and liberal bourgeoisie of the West try to make the workers into an obedient political tool 'onto our soil'. And so the authors of the *Credo* say nothing that is in essence new. They only develop those ideas that Mr. N.N. defended in the pamphlet directed against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, whilst taking them to their most extreme conclusions, just like Mr. G., one of the current pillars of the URSD, in his letters.

This said, it is to the credit of Mr. G. that we have to note how poorly he sometimes understands his teacher, Mr. N.N. Thus he sometimes contradicts him without even noticing it. For example, the 'revolutionary bacillus' should not touch on political questions in its agitation until the time when these questions are raised among the workers 'of their own volition', in the opinion of Mr. N.N., Mr. G. does not judge the matter thus, though he does think that he is 'entirely in agreement' with Mr. N.N. on this question. In one of his letters, Mr. G. says that we should raise up the consciousness of the masses, whilst organising them and putting forward the questions that are closest to them. This would be entirely reasonable if it were not found on that very same page on which we read that it is absurd to argue about the abolition of capitalism and socialism in Russia. Clearly, Mr. G. does not understand that a socialist cannot stir up the consciousness of the working class without directly or indirectly touching on the questions of the abolition of capitalism and that of the independent political activity of the working class. Mr. G. is aware that we Social Democrats should act cautiously and systematically in stimulating the masses. But this awareness remains very vague and it leads him to absurd conclusions. With him it turns out that a Social Democrat wishing to act systematically and carefully should be turned into a bourgeois who is free of any idea concerning the abolition of capitalism. This is a very sad conclusion.<sup>48</sup>

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48 An incidental note. The reader will see that the letter of Mr. G. is written with extraordinarily sloppy grammar: in his sentences we do not find the most essential parts of speech. We do not consider that we have the right to improve a single syllable of Mr. G. and the

But enough about this. The documents printed by us do not leave any doubt that in 1898 the 'economic'<sup>49</sup> tendency was dominant among the 'young' members of the 'Union of Russian Social Democrats'. The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* say that they 'do not know' anything about it. This means one of two things: either they are telling the truth or they are not. If they are telling the truth, then what can be expected from an Editorial Board so unfamiliar with the state of affairs in their own Party? And if they are not telling the truth, this is already a very bad sign which shows that they have set themselves the goal of hiding the true state of affairs from their readers and of convincing them that 'everything is going well'. If the press organ of some Russian ministry set itself such a task, we would not be in the least bit surprised: the truth proclaimed by our government press is a very special 'official truth'. But why is 'truth' of this type needed by a publication bearing the name *Rabochee Delo*?

Back to the state of affairs in 1898. The 'economic' tendency raged among the young like a contagion. The caricatures drawn of Marxists by Messrs Mikhailovskii,<sup>50</sup> Kareev,<sup>51</sup> Krivenko<sup>52</sup> and others became flesh, appearing before us in the role of heralds of 'the last word in Russian Social-Democratic tactics'. All dealings with Russia were then being conducted by that group

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reader should not blame the proof-reader for the failings of the author [Plekhanov's footnote].

- 49 Using this expression, I understand its inaccuracy very well. The tendency I am criticising can really only be termed economic in the sense one speaks of 'economy travel' (*voyages éconómique*) or 'cooking on a budget' (*cuisine éconómique*). The epithet 'economic' equates here to the epithet 'cheap' or 'not costing much'. But we cannot always demand accurate terminology in the political press: in it, we have to make concessions to everyday jargon [Plekhanov's footnote].
- 50 Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovskii (1842–1904) was a writer for the leading cultural and literary journal, *Otechestvennie Zapiski*, ('Fatherland Notes'), which was legally published from 1818 to 1884, and for the illegal publications of 'People's Will'. He viewed Marxism as an inflexible 'grand narrative' of history, concluding that Marxists supported the development of capitalism in Russia as a means to socialism. Marx himself rejected this view in various correspondence and polemics with Russian revolutionaries (See, for example, Shanin (ed.) 1983, pp. 99–123).
- 51 Nikolai Ivanovich Kareev (1850–1931) was a Russian historian specialising in the French Revolution. Politically liberal, he was dismissed from St. Petersburg University in 1899 following alleged influence on student disturbances and was only able to return to his post in 1906. In terms of his philosophy of history, he was regarded as an idealist by later Soviet scholars but remained a member of the Academy of Sciences until his death.
- 52 Sergei Nikolaevich Krivenko (1847–1906) was another Populist intellectual who contributed to *Otechestvennie Zapiski*. From 1895–7 he edited the 'legal Marxist' journal, *Novoe Slovo*, which was eventually suppressed.

mentioned in the first of the letters printed in our collection, which consisted entirely of 'Economists'.<sup>53</sup> They convinced us that the comrades in Russia fully shared their way of thinking. We referred to the *Manifesto* of the Russian Party in opposition to this. But the improbably difficult conditions of activity in Russia brought an extraordinarily frequent turnover of personnel in its train. In order to clarify which tendency predominated there and what our comrades in Russia wanted from our publications, we sent a synopsis of our arguments with the 'young' to St. Petersburg. They answered us with laconic advice: give some freedom to the new forces.<sup>54</sup> Then we tried to publish *Listok Rabotnika* in co-operation with representatives of the 'economic' tendency. As was to be expected, this attempt resulted in complete failure. What was to be done? All that remained was to leave the Editorial Board entirely. That is what we did in November 1898.

The advice received by us from St. Petersburg – 'give some freedom to the young forces' – shows that our comrades in Russia did not have a correct understanding of our relations with the 'young' comrades living abroad. The latter would not cease complaining that we stopped them working in accordance with their convictions. But their complaints were completely without basis. In what way would we have been able to constrain the activity of the young comrades? Only by one method: the method of excluding them from the editorial boards of the foreign Social-Democratic publications. But we did not want to exclude them, on the contrary, we had already expressed our intention of resigning from the Editorial Board of *Rabotnik* more than once. This is proved by the following lines:

As for the Editorial Board, the... comrades have categorically spoken against any kind of change in so far as they cannot imagine who could replace the members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group at the current time... Perhaps it would be possible to broaden the circle of your helpers, who under your direction could liberate you from a great deal of the menial work and who could at the same time also become more closely acquainted with the main features of the business, but no more than this. The leadership should remain entirely yours so long as you have enough strength for all this exhausting and draining work.

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53 The Berlin section of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad.

54 As a result, following our departure from the Editorial Board, the St. Petersburg comrades told us that they had agreed to preach the political struggle to the intelligentsia whilst speaking to the workers about nothing more than 'adding the kopeck to the ruble' [Plekhanov's footnote].

These lines I took from the letter of Mr. M.M., to whom Axelrod suggested a correspondence with the Russian comrades concerning a new Editorial Board for *Listok Rabotnika* on behalf of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.<sup>55</sup>

Among the comrades who categorically declared themselves against all changes in this area can be found Mr. N.N., subsequently the author of the pamphlet against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, and Mr. G., who is 'entirely' in agreement with him. Mr. N.N. did not want any change in the Editorial Board to such a degree that he found it necessary to write to Axelrod:

We firmly oppose changes in the Editorial Board for two reasons. Firstly, there is not a single experienced writer, not a single person with a literary reputation among the young comrades. We think that nobody with any self-respect will agree to become an editor on the basis of having been asked to write one or two articles in his whole life. Secondly, there is nobody sufficiently familiar with Russia among the young comrades. They are still wet behind the ears...

The 'Emancipation of Labour' group withdrew its suggestion of electing a new Editorial Board only in the light of these appeals from the . . . . group. This was known to Mr. G. and other 'young' comrades. Now these same comrades claim that their quarrel with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group was not provoked by programmatic differences but by the fact that the group would not agree to any changes in the Editorial Board. Such is their 'official truth'.<sup>56</sup>

Having resigned from our editorial responsibilities, we were soon surprised by a strange sight and strange phrases. Those same people who spoke of 'new' tactics and about the untimeliness of political agitation started to become conspicuous as convinced adherents of 'politics', and Mr. G. set about convincing not only people with no involvement in the movement, but also ourselves, that there was never any kind of disagreement between him and us. I hope our collection jolts his memory back to life.

Contemplating this sudden metamorphosis, we were able to explain it only by the fact that the 'young' comrades themselves saw what nonsense they spoke in 1898 when propagating their new idea and that they were ashamed of their empty phrases. We were involuntarily reminded of the words of Krylov:

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55 The letter is dated: 7 . . . 1898. By its contents it is clear that it was written in February or March 1898. Mr. M.M. is the author of the first of the letters printed in our collection [Plekhanov's footnote].

56 The letters I cite here are held by Axelrod and can, if required, be reproduced in their entirety [Plekhanov's footnote].

O children, how dangerous is your age!  
 A young mouse, knowing nothing of the world,  
 Almost came to grief!<sup>57</sup>

But if our young mouse avoided grief, if the 'young' comrades recognised their mistake and did not follow their teacher N.N. who, logically continuing his development, approached a position as similar as two drops of water to that of the *Credo*, then what I hope is their sincere repentance has still far from eliminated the confusion of understanding and relationships which was caused by their childish frondeurism.<sup>58</sup> At present we have three different types of publication:

- 1) The publications of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, which continue to adhere firmly to their previous tendency.
- 2) The publications of the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* which, as is clear from the programmatic article printed in the first issue of its journal, and from some of its other statements, incline towards eclecticism, and which in vain tries to reconcile Karl Marx with Mr. V. I . . . n, one of its editors. No later than November 1899, V. I . . . n presented a paper in Geneva in which he spoke about the existence in our Party of two tendencies and of the fact that he, Mr. V. I . . . n belonged to the economic tendency. But the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*, of which Mr. V. I . . . n belongs, 'does not know' anything. Just try to make sense of this 'cunning mechanism'.<sup>59</sup>
- 3) The publication, *Rabochaia Mysl'*, concerning which there is no longer any question of reconciliation and where, on the contrary, the economic tendency of Mr. G. and his co-thinkers has bloomed in all its beautiful glory.<sup>60</sup> And these are all 'comrades'! All these are Social Democrats! Is this not anarchy? Is this not chaos? Is this not shameful?

57 The verse here is normally attributed to the poet and statesman Ivan Ivanovich Dmitriev (1760–1837), not Ivan Andreevich Krylov (1769–1844). See Dmitriev 1967, p. 187.

58 Such repentance should be accompanied by an open admission of one's mistakes, but our never-'Economist' comrades are not in the least inclined to such an admission. One cannot but regret this matter [Plekhanov's footnote].

59 This phrase is probably a reference to a pamphlet written by Vasilii Egorovich Varzar (1851–1940) which criticised the Russian taxation system and its effects on the peasantry. Its title can be translated as: *The Cunning Mechanism: A True Account of Where the Peasants' Money Goes* (Varzar 1903).

60 *Rabochee Delo* polemicises against *Rabochaia Mysl'*. But this does not prevent it from feeling its influence. Thus, for example the main idea of Mr. Krichenskii's article on

Now Mr. G. himself has renounced the 'economic' tendency rather like Peter renounced Jesus. Perhaps some will praise him for this. But I ask whether anything sensible can be said about the 'politics' of Mr. G. and his co-thinkers, who so recently maintained that 'it is utopian and childish to put the socialisation of the instruments of labour in our programme'?

And I fear that their advocacy of political struggle will lead to precisely that confusion of thought to which their advocacy of struggle on the basis of economics led. The matter is not one of exactly which tendency Mr. G. supports, but of why we have so many people who call themselves Social Democrats without having assimilated even the ABC of contemporary socialism. This explains the confusion reigning amongst us, thanks to which it will soon be possible to say with certainty that wherever two Russian Social Democrats meet, three Social-Democratic parties will be founded. I admit I never thought I would live to see such a shame!

We need to get out of this chaotic and shameful situation at all costs. Woe to a Party which patiently endures this confusion.

To get out of an unpleasant situation it is first of all necessary to attentively study its causes. I hope that the present collection will be very useful for all those who want to study our situation. But, as has already been noted, I considered it just to dedicate the collection to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* in so far as they were the motive for its publication.

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### Protest

*A meeting of Social Democrats from a certain locality that was attended by 17 individuals unanimously approved the following resolution and decided to publish it, thus bringing the matter before all comrades for discussion:*

In recent times, a departure from those basic principles of Russian Social Democracy that were pronounced both by its founders and leading fighters, the members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, and by the Social-Democratic publications of the Russian workers' organisations of the 1890s has been observed among Russian Social Democrats. The *Credo* printed below, which most likely expresses the fundamental views of several (so-called

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Chernyshevskii (*Rabochee Delo* No. 4) is clearly borrowed from the article about the very same writer in *Rabochaia Mysl'* [Plekhanov's footnote].

‘young’) Social Democrats, represents an attempt at a systematic and definite exposition of these ‘new’ views. This is the *Credo* in its entirety:

The existence of a guild and manufacturing period in the West left a distinctive mark on the whole of subsequent history, especially on the history of Social Democracy. The necessity of the bourgeoisie winning free forms, its striving to be free of the restricted production of guild regulations, made the bourgeoisie a revolutionary element; everywhere in the West it started with *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, with the conquest of free political forms. But with these conquests it gave a promissory note to its future opponent, the working class, to use the words of Bismarck. Almost everywhere in the West, the working class did not conquer democratic institutions; it took advantage of them. One might object that it did participate in revolutions. The historical evidence refutes this opinion; even in 1848, when a strengthening of the constitution took place, the working class represented an urban-handicraft element, philistine democracy, the actual factory proletariat scarcely existed and the proletariat of the great enterprises (the German weavers of Hauptman,<sup>61</sup> the weavers of Lyon<sup>62</sup>) constituted a wild mass, good only at rioting but in no sense at raising any kind of political demands. We can say directly that the constitution of 1848 was won by the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, the artisans.<sup>63</sup> Conversely, the working class (artisan and factory workers, type-setters, weavers, watchmakers and so on) had been accustomed to

61 Here Kuskova appears to be referring to the 1892 play *Die Weber* (“The Weavers”) by Georg Hauptmann (1862–1946), a German writer who in 1912 won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The play is about the uprising of the Silesian weavers in 1844, an event sometimes viewed as one of the earliest manifestations of an independent labour movement in Germany.

62 The silk weavers of Lyon rose in dramatic armed rebellion in 1831 and 1834 as a result of labour disputes. In 1831, their aim was to maintain wage rates during a period of poor trade. During the dispute the workers occupied the town hall, successfully acquiring the support of the local national guard (itself made up largely of weavers) and looting the local arsenal. Indecisive leadership and the fact that the dispute was initially only viewed as a local matter by the workers prevented the ‘loss’ of France’s second city to its proletariat from being converted into a nationwide uprising and the city was retaken by central government forces. A later revolt involving a more politically conscious leadership was put down with great violence in 1834, with around ten thousand survivors being sentenced to prison or transportation.

63 Presumably a reference to the constitution of the French ‘Second Republic’, which lasted from February 1848 to December 1851, when it was overthrown in a *coup* led by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808–73), later Emperor Napoleon III.



participating in organisations – in mutual-aid funds, religious societies and so forth – since the Middle Ages. This organising spirit still exists among skilled workers in the West and sharply distinguishes them from the factory proletariat, which joins organisations slowly and badly, and is only good at the so-called *loose organisation* and not durable organisations with rules and regulations. It was these skilled factory workers who constituted the core of the Social-Democratic parties. Thus, the following picture emerged: the relative ease and full possibility of political struggle on the one hand, and on the other, the planned organisation of this struggle with the aid of workers educated by the manufacturing period. It was on this basis that theoretical and practical Marxism developed in the West. Its starting point proved to be the parliamentary-political struggle with the perspective of a seizure of power (only similar to Blanquism<sup>64</sup> in externals, of an entirely different character in terms of its origins) on the one hand, and *Zusammenbruch*<sup>65</sup> on the other. Marxism proved to be the theoretical expression of the dominant practice of political struggle, which prevailed over economic struggle. Both in Belgium and in France, and especially in Germany, workers organised political struggle with improbable ease and economic struggle with terrible difficulty, with great friction. And up until now, economic organisations (if we except England) have suffered from an unusual weakness and lack of stability compared to political ones, and they everywhere *laissent à désirer quelque chose*.<sup>66</sup> So long as energy was not wholly exhausted in political struggle, *Zusammenbruch* proved to be an essential organisational *Schlagwort*<sup>67</sup> that was fated to play a great historical role. The basic rule that can be deduced from the study of the workers' movement is the line of least resistance. In the West, this line was political activity and Marxism, in the way it was formulated in the *Communist Manifesto*, was the most success-

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64 The followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805–81), a French revolutionary republican and socialist. Blanqui's ideas were pro-urban worker but not Marxist, emphasising armed conspiracies, *coups d'état* and temporary dictatorship as a means to socialism, as he assumed that a revolutionary government could re-order economic relations almost at will. As such, they bore a marked similarity to those of 'People's Will' in Russia. Extremely active as a revolutionary, he spent a total of 33 years in gaol for his activities, was elected President of the Paris Commune in his absence in 1871 and in 1879 was elected to the Chamber of Deputies of the Third Republic whilst in prison, and for this reason was barred from taking up the position.

65 'Collapse' (German).

66 'Leave something to be desired' (French).

67 'Slogan' (German).

ful possible form in which the movement could have expressed itself. But when, on the other hand, all its energies had been exhausted in political activities, when the political movement had reached that degree of tension beyond which it was difficult and almost impossible to go (the slow growth of votes in the most recent period, the apathy of the public at meetings, the despondent tone of the literature), the powerlessness of parliamentary activity and the entry onto the scene of the unskilled masses – an unorganised factory proletariat which was almost incapable of yielding to organisation – created that which now bears the name of ‘Bernsteiniad’, the crisis of Marxism in the West. A more logical order of things than the development of the workers’ movement from the *Communist Manifesto* to the Bernsteiniad is hard to imagine, and the careful observation of the whole of this process can define the outcome of this ‘crisis’ with astronomical precision. The question here is not one of the victory or defeat of the Bernsteiniad – this is of little interest – the question is one of the fundamental alteration of practical activity, which for a long time has already been taking place, little by little in the depths of the Party.

This alteration will take place not only in the direction of a more energetic prosecution of the economic struggle, the strengthening of economic organisations, but mainly – and this is most essential – in the direction of a change in the relationship of the Party to the rest of the opposition parties. Impatient Marxism, negating Marxism, primitive Marxism (using a too schematic conception of the class division of society) will give way to democratic Marxism and the social position of the Party in the depths of contemporary society has to be decisively altered. The Party will *recognise* society, and its narrow corporative and in most cases sectarian tasks will be broadened into social tasks, whilst its aspiration of seizing power will be transformed into one directed towards changing, towards the reforming of contemporary society in a democratic direction adapted to the contemporary state of things, with the goal of a more successful, more complete defence of the rights of (all) the working classes. The content of the idea of ‘politics’ will broaden out into its true social meaning and the practical demands of the moment will receive more weight and will be able to reckon on the greater attention of the Party than was the case previously.

It is not difficult to draw conclusions for Russia from this short description of the course of the development of the workers’ movement in the West. The line of least resistance will never be directed towards political activity in our case. Impossible political oppression will compel many to

speak about it, to focus attention on precisely this question, but it will never compel practical action. If in the West the weak forces of the workers, having been attracted to political activity, grew strong on it and were developed, here these weak forces, conversely, stand before a wall of political oppression and not only lack practical ways of fighting it and, consequently, ways of developing, but are systematically suffocated by it and are not able to put out even the weakest shoots. If we add to this the fact that our working class did not inherit that organising spirit with which the fighters of the West distinguished themselves, then the resulting picture is depressing and capable of plunging the most optimistic Marxist, one who believes that the odd factory chimney by the very fact of its existence brings great benefit, into despondency. Also difficult, infinitely difficult, is the economic struggle, but it is possible and it is, at last, being practised by the masses themselves. Becoming accustomed to organisation in this struggle and constantly running up against the political regime in it, the Russian worker will finally create what can be termed a form of the workers' movement, some type of organisation which approaches the conditions of Russian reality more closely. At the present time, we can say with certainty that the Russian workers' movement still remains in an amoebic, formless state. The strike movement, which exists under every form of organisation, still cannot be called the crystallised form of the Russian movement, whilst the illegal organisations clearly do not yet deserve attention from the quantitative point of view (I do not speak of their use under current conditions).

That is the situation. If we add the famine and the process of the ruination of the countryside to this, phenomena which aid *Streikbrecherdom*<sup>68</sup> and, consequently, present still greater difficulties in raising the working masses to a more reasonable cultural level – then what can a Russian Marxist do? Discussion of an independent workers' political party is in essence nothing more than the consequence of transferring foreign tasks and foreign outcomes onto our soil. At the moment, Russian Marxism is a doleful spectacle. Its practical tasks are at present meagre, its theoretical knowledge – in so far as it utilises it not as a tool of investigation, but as a scheme of activity – is of no value for the carrying out of even these meagre practical tasks. Apart from that, these second-hand schemes appear harmful in the practical sense. Having forgotten that in the West, the working class has already come out onto the open field of political activity, our Marxists relate to radical or liberal oppositional activity of all the non-working sections of society with a greater con-

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68 'Strikebreaker' (German).

tempt than is necessary. The least attempt to focus attention on social manifestations of a liberal-political character provokes protest on the part of the orthodox Marxists, who forget that a whole series of historical conditions prevent us from being Western Marxists and demand a different Marxism from us, one which is appropriate and necessary under Russian conditions. Obviously, the lack of political feeling among Russian citizens can hardly be expiated with conversations about politics or appeals to non-existent forces. Such political intuition can only be acquired through education, through participation in that life, although it is not Marxist, which Russian reality offers. However much 'negation' was appropriate (temporarily) in the West, so much was it harmful for us, because negation stemming from some organisation possessing actual forces is one thing, whilst negation coming from a formless mass of uncoordinated individuals is something else entirely.

For the Russian Marxist there is one conclusion: participation in (assisting) the economic struggle of the proletariat and participation in liberal-oppositional activity. The Russian Marxist became a 'negator' very early, and that negation weakened that portion of energy in him which should have been directed towards political radicalism. For the moment, this is not a terrible problem, but if the class scheme prevents the real participation of the Russian *intelligent* in life and moves him too far away from opposition circles – this would be a real loss to all who are compelled to fight for the rule of law independent of a proletariat which has still not set itself political tasks. The political innocence of the Russian *Marxist-intelligent* which is hidden behind his mental reasoning on political themes could well play a nasty joke on him.

We do not know if there are many Russian Social Democrats who share these views. But it is beyond doubt that, generally speaking, ideas of this type have their supporters, and we therefore consider ourselves obliged to protest categorically against such views and to warn all comrades against this threatened perversion of Russian Social Democracy away from the path previously indicated by it, namely: the formation of an independent workers' political party that is inseparable from the class struggle of the proletariat and which poses the conquest of political freedom as its immediate task.

The above-printed *Credo* presents, first of all, 'a short description of the course of development of the workers' movement in the West' and, secondly, 'conclusions for Russia'.

In the first place, the representation of the past of the Western European workers' movement by the authors of the *Credo* is completely false. It is not true to say that the working class did not participate in the struggle for political

freedom and in political revolutions in the West. The history of Chartism and of the revolutions of 1848 in France, Germany and Austria prove the contrary. It is completely untrue to say that 'Marxism emerged as the theoretical expression of the dominant practice of political struggle, which prevailed over economic struggle'. On the contrary, Marxism emerged where there was non-political socialism (Owenism,<sup>69</sup> Fourierism,<sup>70</sup> True Socialism<sup>71</sup> and so forth) and the *Communist Manifesto* immediately declared its opposition to this non-political socialism. Even when Marxism emerged fully armed with theory (*Capital*) and organised the famous 'International Workingmen's Association', political struggle was not in the least the dominant practice (narrow trade unionism in England, anarchism and Proudhonism in the Romance countries). In Germany, the great historical service of Lassalle consisted in the fact that he converted the working class from the tail of the liberal bourgeoisie into an independent political Party. Marxism tied up the economic and political struggle of the working class into one inseparable whole, and the *Credo's* authors' most unfortunate and regrettable retreat from Marxism is characterised by efforts to separate these forms of struggle.

Furthermore, the presentation of the contemporary situation of the Western-European workers' movement by the authors of the *Credo*, and its presentation of the theory (Marxism) under the banner of which this movement marches, is also completely untrue. To speak of a 'crisis of Marxism' means to repeat the senseless phrases of bourgeois hack-writers who are always trying to exaggerate every argument between socialists and to turn them into a split in the socialist parties. The notorious 'Bernsteiniaid' – in the sense in which it is understood by the public in general and the authors of the *Credo* in particular – represents an attempt to narrow the theory of Marxism and an attempt to convert the revolutionary workers' party into a reformist one, and this attempt, as one might expect, has met with the decisive condemnation of the majority

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69 Robert Owen (1771–1858) was a British utopian socialist and philanthropist, also a successful industrialist who took over a mill at New Lanark near Glasgow and ran it on communal principles, establishing crèches, schools and other social services for the workers whilst making it a commercial success. He supported the formation of co-operatives, friendly societies and the like, but opposed class-struggle doctrines. He was nonetheless cited by Engels as a key influence on Marxian socialism owing to his attempts to develop a labour movement and his atheistic philosophical radicalism.

70 See Chapter 22, footnote 47.

71 The True Socialists were a literary and philosophical trend in Germany during the 1840s who were closely associated with the Young Hegelians. Their most noted members were Karl Grün (1817–87) and Moses Hess (1812–75). They supported the revolutions of 1848 but rejected class struggle politics, advocating co-operative and mutualist enterprises.

of German Social Democrats. Opportunistic tendencies have more than once been discovered in German Social Democracy and have on every occasion been rejected by the Party, which has faithfully preserved the testament of international revolutionary socialism. We are certain that any attempt to introduce opportunistic views into Russia will meet with a similarly decisive rebuff on the part of the great majority of Russian Social Democrats.

Similarly, there can be no question of a 'fundamental change in the practical activity' of the Western-European workers' parties, regardless of the opinion of the authors of the *Credo*. The great significance of the economic struggle of the proletariat together with the necessity of that struggle was recognised by Marxism from the very beginning, and already in the 1840s Marx and Engels were challenging those utopian socialists who denied the significance of this struggle. When the 'International Workingmen's Association' was founded, around twenty years later, the question of the significance of workers' trade unions and the economic struggle was raised at its very first Congress, in Geneva in 1866. A resolution of this Congress indicated the precise significance of this struggle, whilst warning socialists and workers both against exaggerating its significance (something which was notable among English workers at that time) and against underestimating its significance (something which was notable among the French and the Germans, especially the Lassalleans). The resolution recognised workers' trade unions not only as a legitimate, but as a necessary phenomenon of the capitalist system; it recognised them as extremely important for both the organisation of the working class in its day-to-day struggle with capital and for the abolition of wage labour. The resolution recognised that workers' trade unions should not exclusively direct their attention towards 'the immediate struggle against capital' and that they should not stand aside from the general social and political movement of the working class; their goals should not be 'narrow' and they should strive towards the general liberation of the oppressed millions of working people.

From that time, the workers' parties of various countries have more than once posed (and will continue to pose) the question of whether one should direct a little more or less attention to the economic or the political struggle of the proletariat at a given moment, but the general issue of principle still remains the one that is described by Marxism. The conviction that the only possible class struggle of the proletariat must of necessity unite the economic and political struggle has entered into the flesh and blood of international Social Democracy. What is more, historical experience indisputably demonstrates that the absence of political freedom or the constriction of the political rights of the proletariat always leads to the necessary prioritising of the political struggle.

Still less can there be a question of any real change in the relations of the workers' parties to the rest of the opposition parties. Marxism has indicated the correct position in this respect, which is equally distant from both the exaggeration of the significance of politics and from conspiratorial methods (Blanquism etc.), and from contempt for politics or the narrowing of it to opportunistic socialism, reformist socialism, social botch-work socialism (anarchism, utopian and petty-bourgeois socialism, state socialism, professorial socialism and so forth). The proletariat should strive towards the foundation of independent workers' political parties, the main goal of which should be the seizure of political power by the proletariat for the purpose of organising a socialist society. The proletariat must not look upon other classes and parties as 'one reactionary mass': on the contrary, it should participate in political and social life in its entirety and should support every revolutionary movement against the existing system, acting as a defender of every oppressed nationality or race, every persecuted faith, disenfranchised sex and so on. The discussion of this subject on the part of the authors of the *Credo* only provides evidence of a desire to conceal the class character of the proletariat's struggle, to weaken this struggle with some mindless 'recognition of society' and reduce revolutionary Marxism to a commonplace reformist tendency. We are convinced that the great majority of Russian Social Democrats absolutely reject such distortions of the basic principles of Social Democracy.

Incorrect premises relative to the Western-European workers' movement lead the authors of the *Credo* to still more incorrect 'conclusions for Russia'.

The assertion that the Russian working class 'has still not set itself political tasks' testifies only to unfamiliarity with the Russian revolutionary movement. Even the 'Northern Russian Workers' Union' (founded in 1878) and the 'Southern Russian Workers' Union' (founded in 1879) put the demand for political freedom into their programmes.<sup>72</sup> Following the reactionary years of the 1880s, the working class repeatedly raised the very same demand in the 1890s. The conviction that 'discussion of an independent workers' political party is in essence nothing more than the consequence of transferring foreign tasks and foreign outcomes onto our soil' testifies only to a complete misunderstanding-

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72 The Northern Workers' Union was based in St. Petersburg from 1878–80 and appears to have been the result of an amalgamation of several older workers' circles in the city. Soviet sources claim that it had around two hundred active members. An English translation of its revolutionary-democratic, Populist programme can be found in Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 41–4. The Southern Union was based in Odessa: later Soviet authorities claim it existed from 1875–6, rather than 1879 as the text of the *Protest* states here. It apparently had around 60 members and promoted a Populist ideology.



ing of the historical role of the Russian working class and of the most vital tasks of Russian Social Democracy. Properly speaking, the programme of the authors of the *Credo* clearly inclines towards the idea that the working class, following 'the line of least resistance', is to be limited to economic campaigns whilst 'liberal-opposition elements' fight with the 'participation' of Marxists 'for the rule of law'. The realisation of such a programme would be equivalent to the political suicide of Russian Social Democracy, equivalent to a great way-laying and belittlement of the Russian workers' movement and the Russian revolutionary movement (these latter two concepts coincide for us). Even the possibility of such a programme's appearance shows how justified the fears of one of the most advanced fighters of Russian Social Democracy, Pavel Axelrod, were when at the end of 1897 he wrote of the possibility of the following perspective: 'The workers' movement does not go beyond the narrow channel of purely economic clashes between workers and bosses and lacks in itself any political character. In the struggle for political freedom, the advanced sections of the proletariat follow the revolutionary circles and fractions of the so-called intelligentsia'.<sup>73</sup>

Russian Social Democrats should declare all-out war against the whole range of ideas finding expression in the *Credo*, in so far as these ideas lead directly to the realisation of this perspective. Russian Social Democrats should invest all their energies in the realisation of another perspective, expounded by Axelrod in the following words: 'Another perspective: the Social Democracy organises the Russian proletariat into an independent political Party which fights for freedom partly alongside and in union with bourgeois revolutionary fractions (in so far as these exist) and partly by attracting the most pro-people and revolutionary elements from the intelligentsia directly to its ranks, or at least securing the following of these elements'.<sup>74</sup>

At the very moment Axelrod was writing these lines, announcements from the Social Democrats in Russia clearly showed that the great majority of them had adopted the same point of view. True, one newspaper of the St. Petersburg workers, *Rabochaia Mysl'*, was apparently inclining towards the ideas of the authors of the *Credo* and unfortunately expressed that completely mistaken idea, utterly opposed to Social Democracy, that 'the economic basis of the movement' can be 'obscured by the determination to never forget a political

73 Axelrod 1898, p. 19. [Lenin's footnote]. This pamphlet has been translated into English (Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 227–41, see p. 236 for an alternative rendition of the lines cited).

74 Axelrod 1898, p. 20 [Lenin's footnote]. See also Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 237.

ideal' in their leading programmatic article (No. 1, October 1897).<sup>75</sup> But at the same time, another newspaper of the Petersburg workers, *St Peterburgskii Rabochii Listok* (No. 2, September 1897)<sup>76</sup> decisively spoke in favour of the idea that 'the overthrow of the autocracy... is possible only with a strongly organised mass workers' party', adding that, 'having been organised into a strong party', the workers 'will liberate themselves and the whole of Russia from all political and economic oppression'. A third newspaper, *Rabochaia Gazeta*, wrote in a leading article:

The campaign against the autocratic government for political freedom... is the immediate task of the Russian workers' movement... The Russian workers' movement will increase its forces tenfold if it acts as one well-constructed whole with a common name and well-constructed organisations... Separate workers' circles should be transformed into one common Party... The Russian workers' Party will be a Social-Democratic Party (No. 2, November 1897).

That the great majority of Russian Social Democrats shared precisely these convictions of *Rabochaia Gazeta* is clear from the fact that a Congress of Russian Social Democrats formed the *Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*, published its *Manifesto* and recognised *Rabochaia Gazeta* as the official press organ of the Party in the spring of 1898.

In this way, the authors of the *Credo* take a colossal step back relative to that degree of development already attained by Russian Social Democracy, and which it had already displayed in the *Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*. If the desperate persecution of the Russian government has led to a situation in which the activity of the 'Party' is temporarily weakened and its official press organ has ceased to appear, then the duty of all Russian Social Democrats consists in directing all their efforts toward a decisive strengthening of the Party, towards the working-out of the Party's programme and towards the renewal of its official press organ. In view of that

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75 This article is reprinted in: Lenin 1935, Vol. 2, pp. 611–12. This short article advocates 'economic' agitation as the most effective means of acquiring working-class support for Social Democracy and criticises the influence of intellectuals on the Social-Democratic movement as unnecessary.

76 This was actually a publication of the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. It mainly gave coverage to workers' 'economic' struggles but adopted a militant tone. Only two issues appeared, the first in February 1897. The second issue was published in Geneva.

instability of ideas to which the mere possibility of such a programme as the aforementioned *Credo* appearing testifies, we consider it especially necessary to emphasise the following basic principles that are laid out in the *Manifesto* and which have great importance for the Russian Social Democracy.

Firstly, Russian Social Democracy 'wants to be and to remain the class movement of the organised working masses'. From this, it follows that the motto of Social Democracy should be: assistance to workers not only in their economic but also in their political struggle; agitation not only on the basis of the most immediate economic needs, but also on the basis of all manifestations of political oppression; propaganda not only of the ideas of scientific socialism, but also of democratic ideas. Only the theory of revolutionary Marxism can be the banner of the workers' class struggle and Russia's Social Democracy cannot avoid taking an interest in its furthest development and its realisation, whilst at the same time protecting it from those distortions and vulgarisations to which 'modish theory' is so often subjected (and the successes of revolutionary Social Democracy in Russia have already made it a 'modish theory'). Whilst for the moment concentrating all our forces on activity among factory, plant and mining workers, the Social Democracy should not forget that, with the spreading of the movement, home-workers, craft and agricultural workers and the millions of ruined peasants dying of hunger should be included among the workers being organised by it.

Secondly, 'the Russian workers should carry the task of winning political freedom on their broad shoulders'. Setting the overthrow of absolutism as its immediate task, the Social Democracy should act as the foremost fighter for democracy, and by force of this alone should offer every kind of support to all the democratic elements of the Russian population, attracting them to itself as allies. Only an independent workers' party can act as a firm bulwark in the struggle with the autocracy, and only in union with such a party, in support of it, can the remaining fighters for political freedom actively prove themselves.

Thirdly and finally, 'both as a movement and as a socialist tendency, the Russian Social-Democratic Party takes up the cause and prolongs the traditions of all preceding revolutionary campaigns in Russia; presenting the conquest of political freedom as the most important of the most immediate tasks of the Party as a whole, the Social Democracy moves towards a goal that was earlier designated by the glorious activists of the old "People's Will"'. The traditions of the whole preceding revolutionary movement in Russia demand that at the present time the Social Democrats concentrate all their forces on the organisation of a party strengthened by internal discipline and through the development of conspiratorial technique. If the activists of the old 'People's

Will' managed to play a great role in Russian history despite the relative weakness of those social layers which supported their few heroes, then Social Democracy, basing itself on the class struggle of proletariat, will succeed in becoming invincible. 'The Russian proletariat will throw the yoke of the autocracy from its back directly so as to continue the struggle with capital and the bourgeoisie with all the more energy, right up until the complete victory of socialism'.

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We invite all groups of Social Democrats and all workers' circles in Russia to discuss the above-cited *Credo* along with our resolution and to declare their precise relation to the questions raised, in order to remove all disagreement and to speed up the business of organising and strengthening the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

**Letter to Axelrod from one of the Authors of a Pamphlet against  
the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group**

Dear Pavel Borisovich,

I too am sorry that I am not able to talk to you personally . . . From the theoretical point of view, the genesis and development of the property interest of the working class will give us the sole vantage point from which it will be possible to understand the political aspirations of workers and the much-differentiated and often contradictory forms of organisation created by the working class in the course of its development. From this point of view, socialism appears as the logical derivative of the interests of the class of factory workers, and in no sense the derivative of the interests of the group which Schulze-Delitzsch,<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808–83) was a pioneer of credit unions and co-operatives and for a period a centre-left deputy in the German Reichstag. His views emphasised 'self-help', rather than class struggle or state intervention, as the best means for improving the condition of the working class.

Brentano,<sup>78</sup> our V.V.<sup>79</sup> and other philistines defended.<sup>80</sup> The possibility of psychological manipulation is being narrowed, whilst revolutionary outbursts – and their inevitable reaction – are starting to be understood and the working class itself, analysed from this point of view, already appears as a magnitude defined in every given concrete particular, and not as a fiction. In this connection, Belgium was the very best school for me. The political superstructures do not conceal the process of workers' development. There, it was possible to visibly observe the antagonism of the small craftsmen with the workers from the big factories (for example, on the question of national insurance), and all the more that of the intelligentsia, dreaming of the seizure of power and social revolution, with the workers defending their real interests. After Belgium I became ashamed to speak of social revolution . . . I do not know why the words 'property' and 'real' always provoke images of some sort of vile baseness among many people. Does not the word 'real' simply mean 'existing'? Will the defence of property interests not demand political rights in the nearest future? But the demand for political rights by workers has nothing in common with the overthrow of the autocracy. In essence we now do even have the right to speak about the autocracy which, like a serpent, ducks and weaves in order to adapt itself to a new mode of production and tries to silence the bourgeoisie, which is in need of broad freedom, with congresses, consortia and combinations. And one cannot fail to recognise that our bourgeoisie has this freedom and that it does not have to smash the medieval framework of the guild system – this was smashed long ago by the fiscal needs of the autocracy itself. If the bourgeoisie can now satisfy its grasping instincts without obstacle, if the government dances to the tune of both the landowners and the factory owners, then all

78 Franz Clemens Brentano (1838–1917) was a Roman Catholic professor of philosophy, born in Germany and active in Austria. He became involved in a controversy with Engels after he accused Marx of falsifying quotations, the result of which was an exchange of views in which Brentano defended the position that trade unions and labour laws alone could resolve the problems of capitalism described by Marx and Engels. See Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 27, pp. 95–176.

79 Apparently this is Vasilii Pavlovich Vorontsov (1847–1918), a Populist intellectual who argued that Russia could not follow a path of development modelled on Western-European capitalism. He highlighted the supposedly unique features of Russian village life that orientated the peasantry towards collective economic forms. As such he clashed with Russia's Social Democrats and 'Legal Marxists' in the early 1890s, acquiring a reputation among the latter for simplifying Marx's theory of history along economic-determinist lines.

80 Which group is being referred to here is not entirely clear. It may be workers involved in the co-operative movement.

that remains is to wait for one thing: for the interests within the bourgeoisie itself to sharpen. Then the autocracy, failing to oblige one side or the other, will concede its place to a bourgeois constitution. And what of the working class? Can it calmly wait for this constitution? I think that you suspect us of holding precisely this opinion. In Belgium, Germany and England I have clearly seen that the workers have continuously fought for *political rights* during the whole period of the existence of the bourgeois constitution. If a conscious bourgeoisie matures in our case, rich with the experience of its friend – the bourgeoisie of the West – then it is *utopian* to think that it will change the political situation of the workers come the overthrow of the autocracy. Given the disgusting, unconcealed reaction in the West, where workers tremble for the rights they have already won, one cannot expect anything from a constitution in Russia. What remains to be done? It remains for the workers themselves, expecting nothing, not pinning hopes on anyone, under the current form of government, now, immediately, to achieve political rights, tirelessly and step by step. For the workers, there is no stage at which they are able to rest; still less does a constitution appear to be such a step. By that same way in which they secured the legalisation of strikes, it is necessary to obtain freedom of assembly and of the press. It is necessary to defend the political rights of workers by means of forever-repeated strikes, by means of a mass movement, by means of mass organisation. In Russia we have to reckon with the startlingly low level of workers' development, and to count on the fact that they will quickly come to understand the role and perniciousness of the autocracy is impossible. But to make up for it, we have another advantage over the slow process of the West – the growth of the great industrial and manufacturing proletariat. There are other advantages: the white terror the government practices on the workers quickly cleans out their heads for them and quickly puts their real – political – interests in order. If it is possible to stifle, to crush the craftsmen's movement in Vilno and the West, then it will be impossible to do this in St. Petersburg and Moscow, with factories. Therefore, it is my opinion that to speak now, to propagandise the overthrow of the autocracy among workers – and this means out-and-out revolution – means exposing them to the greatest historical danger. For the moment there is no consciousness among them of their interests (there is none); for the present there is no practical steadfastness and spirit of organisation; up to now every appeal for the overthrow of the autocracy brings only a 'Battle of Serpukhov' in its wake.<sup>81</sup> So long as a revolution inside the working class itself is not completed, I will portray a revolution in Russia

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81 Here Kuskova appears to be referring to the town of Serpukhov in the Moscow region, which in the feudal period was repeatedly attacked by the Mongols.

at the dawn of the twentieth century as a sea of blood that will submerge the movement for a long time, just as it is being born. Of course, such a revolution is possible even without our propaganda. But the spontaneous movement is not a programmatic question. I do not think that revolution can enter into any programme. A programme – this is the goals and methods of struggle, and consequently also the methods of organising this struggle. Every struggle in history led to organisations, whether they were conscious or whether they sprung up spontaneously. The advantage of Social Democracy over other historical protagonists consists in the fact that they could construct such organisations (whatever form they took) consciously, in an intentional and planned manner. Propaganda relating to the methods of organisation, indicating the road on the basis of the already-conscious interests of the working class is the sole task of the Social Democracy. The future system depends not only on the class of workers, but also on a combination of all the conditions of production, and the latter cannot enter into active, programmatic activity: they are a great unknown, probably even to God himself. To the workers only two things are known: 1) their own, clearly conscious concrete interest and 2) their position among other classes. Consequently, the role of the superstructure, of intelligent Social Democracy, is to understand the interest of the given moment, that active-psychic base which acts as the motive force and, secondly, to understand the position of this mass in the midst of all the other conditions of the given moment as broadly and as correctly as possible. The abstract preaching of socialism and solidarity can be of little help here; conversely, the correctly indicated road of active struggle – whether it leads to success or not – does much: on the one hand it teaches the workers to fight, and on the other, once again concretely, it points out obstacles, thus generating new interest. In this way, knowledge of the methods of struggle is unavoidably linked to the broadening of horizons and goals during the struggle itself.

As communicating a fact without a pre-conceived point of view is logically impossible, this point of view was naturally enough expressed in my article. I wanted to show the evolution of struggle and the choice of methods, from spontaneous outbreaks to the organisation of the Belgian coal miners. I also wanted to show the necessity of political rights for the defence of property. Accordingly, one should note that, all facts considered without distortion, the philosophy which displeases K—v<sup>82</sup> belongs not to me but to members

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82 This appears to be 'D Kol'tsov' (Boris Abramovich Ginzburg, 1863–1920). He was active in revolutionary circles from the 1880s, including the Blagoev circle. He went abroad in 1893 and subsequently served as secretary to a series of Social-Democratic émigré organisations: the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, 'Sotsial-Democrat' and the League



of the Belgian Party: Elbers,<sup>83</sup> Auchters, Léaud, Genoud<sup>84</sup> and many other members of the new anti-utopian (if one can put it like that) tendency in the Belgian workers' movement. I expressed it badly – this depends of course on my not being accustomed to expressing ideas; but I cannot betray points of view, and I do not know how I can revise it.<sup>85</sup> If we abandon the call to organisation, then what remains? A strike – like thousands of others. A strike itself only appeared to me as a pretext for describing the means of struggle and those obstacles which are both external and internal to workers; and I tried to acknowledge both of these. But I probably did this very badly. Kol – v refers to the dispiriting impression of the end of the article. But is it really possible to hide the significance of the bosses' organisations? It is a danger which, given the furious competition of our market, threatens the workers of every country. And once again, the only solution appears to be the organisation of workers in no matter what form, organisation and struggle.

I personally place much hope in the illegal literature in so far as it indicates methods of action to workers and explains their environment to them, albeit with illustrations of struggle on the part of their foreign comrades. I entirely agree with you that it is pointless to meet the viciousness of the autocracy with silence. But this viciousness has two aspects: from the standpoint of viciousness in general, in itself, and of viciousness for a definite class. In the latter case, the analysis is more complex and demands a careful study of the relations of all the classes to the definite class and to the autocracy. In Russia there is an added complexity: Russia emerged late, when capitalist relations in the West were fully formed, and into an international economy in which the precipi-

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of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad, all of which served as vehicles promoting 'Emancipation of Labour' group views. He was responsible for practical arrangements at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in Brussels and was offered a place on the Editorial Board of *Iskra* at this Congress after Martov declined the position to which he had been elected. However Koltsov too refused to join the board, thus siding with the Mensheviks. After 1905 he returned to Russia and supported the 'Liquidationists' and in 1917 he served in the Labour Ministry of the provisional government. He also published several useful contributions to the history of the Russian revolutionary movement.

- 83 Ferdinand Elbers (1862–1943) was a mechanic who became a leading figure in the Brussels federation of the Belgian Labour Party. He later served in the Belgian Senate and Parliament.
- 84 It has not been possible to identify these figures, partially owing to the difficulty of knowing how to represent their names, written using Cyrillic characters, in the Roman alphabet. The spelling of them in the text is, unfortunately, guesswork.
- 85 This is about an article intended for publication in *Listok Rabotnika* [editorial note by David Riazanov in Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, p. 491].

tate breakdown of the old systems amounted to a historical event not entirely consistent with Western-European forms. This is not to say that this indicates a 'unique way of life' or exceptionalism on the part of Russia. No, it is simply a protest against the schematic adaptation of the Western path of development to ours. In the West, it is necessary to reckon with such diverse forms of one and the same phenomenon – capitalism – on one and the same road that the practical activist should, I think, more than anything be interested in these forms as the only concrete things with which he has to reckon. For example, I am firmly convinced that workers will obtain political rights. This in itself does not interest me, but how and when does; the political rights of England are not the same as those of Germany, Belgium or France. Naturally, we can find sufficient basis for these differences from the philosophical point of view, but in practice we need to know the form that is possible according to given conditions. And these conditions in Russia are substantially different: 1) the union of the bourgeoisie, wise and educated, with the autocracy (compare the representatives of the government when there are arguments about monetary reform with our liberals Chuprov,<sup>86</sup> Khodsky<sup>87</sup> ...); 2) the deadly fear of the workers' movement once it takes the position not of Shulze-Delitzch, but of the heavy-industrial proletariat, which is unable to be satisfied by mutual-aid funds. Therefore I think that our workers' struggle for political rights will be more stubborn and protracted than in anywhere else, and that workers' organisations and their tactics will form the cardinal point of every Social Democrat's activity and the basic content of all illegal literature. Thus both the selection of facts and their elucidation should answer to the main task: the present struggle, the possible struggle at one or another given moment. Propaganda of the future, socialism and all such things can for the present serve only as a good means for the attraction of individuals (in the majority of cases not particularly conscious, and sentimental) from the intelligentsia and the working class, but never the masses. In the England of today, this propaganda of socialism is becoming the property of the masses and the minister of finance does not speak without reason when he says that 'the socialism that is rapidly being developed in trade-unionist England threatens her system with plague,

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86 Alexander Alexandrovich Chuprov (1874–1926) was a noted academic who taught statistics at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute and who does not appear to have demonstrated any noteworthy political tendencies.

87 Lev Vladimirovich Khodskii (1854–1919) was a bourgeois-democratic political economist and notable participant in the St. Petersburg Free Economic Society, a well-established learned society which became a centre of 'legal Marxism' – Marxist theory with its political and revolutionary content removed – in the 1890s.

pestilence and famine'.<sup>88</sup> I should say so! There, socialism is the ultimate real interest of the united, organised masses and not merely a sound unconnected to the real life of the working masses. Forgive me, Pavel Borisovich, for tiring you with this long-winded and little-connected exposition of elementary truths. Unfortunately, mathematics and  $2+2=4$  are not at present applied to general truths, so all these truths are coloured by subjectivism and it is hard to meet two Social Democrats who understand the process of development and its starting point in the same way. Precisely because of this circumstance, disagreements of this type do not seem dreadful to me: if people well understand that they cannot and should not stray apart in practice, then in terms of theoretical outlook it follows that we should admit complete freedom of expression (within the confines of a general world-view, naturally) which the – sky group has only just recently requested. Nothing was, or could have been, said about the changes to the Editorial Board for three reasons: 1) the – sky group is too young to give voice to such pretensions; 2) the location of the – sky group is in Russia; 3) the – sky group firmly believes that the 'Emancipation of Labour' group is keenly attentive to the demands of the Russian workers' movement, and if the opinions of the – sky group also turn out to be the opinions of other Russian groups, then the Editorial Board would never obstruct their freedom of expression in the press. I agree with you entirely that the Editorial Board should never permit disagreement when addressing the masses, especially in matters of tactics. But in that case it is all the more necessary to come to an arrangement and establish the points of disagreement in detail, something which it is possible to do only by means of private and detailed discussion. As for pamphlets aimed at the intelligentsia, such variations in point of view are not only not harmful, but desirable, in so far as Marxism is not a dead doctrine but a guiding theory which is being developed and broadened in content. Both the criticism of it and the development of certain underdeveloped positions really are of vital importance.

As regards the 'Supplement',<sup>89</sup> I do not think it should serve as a point of disagreement: it will deal with material for the masses and not for the intelligentsia. If the question of a restrained tone was raised, then this meant precisely the absence of 'the overthrow of the autocracy', socialism and other things that are at present completely inaccessible to the masses, not because

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88 The British Chancellor of the Exchequer at this point was the Conservative Sir Michael Hick-Beach, First Earl of St Aldwyn (1837–1916). The source of the quotation has not been located.

89 *Listok Rabotnika*.

they are illiterate Sysoikas<sup>90</sup> but because whoever knocks on a closed heart does not find the echo he hopes for. There is no doubt that the hearts of the Russian masses are closed to the 'overthrow' and 'socialism' – of this there can be no doubt. There can only be a question of how to open them. The supplement should have been directed towards indicating means comprehensible to the present masses and not towards proving that the kingdom of heaven is inevitable. At present, socialism is good for the evocation of a prayerful and blissful state in the masses by means of reflections on this future, but it is not good for active, conscious and determined struggle.

I do not know whether I have been even partly successful in explaining my point of view. It is as far from Schulze-Delitzsch as it is from some of the positions of the *Communist Manifesto*. If the latter is taken as gospel, then this point of view is heresy. If, on the other hand, it is admitted that life has not stood still, but has moved, then perhaps it has a root in reality, which at the end of the day involves both the further development of the social sciences and of the whole theoretical baggage of Social Democracy in general.

A small illustration: in K—v's pamphlet on the law of 2 June,<sup>91</sup> it is written that 'current legislators concern themselves with the interests of the workers least of all, they more often act against those interests than aid them, the autocracy must perish so that the workers must live'. This conclusion does not correspond with reality: it is as if there were even a single piece of legislation in the West that helped the workers and did not obstruct them in the defence of their interests! In Belgium, where the figurehead King cannot in any sense be considered an 'autocrat', legislation is at a very low level and the struggle with the Catholics becomes more obstinate with every year. Even the promulgated laws (*Les Lois Vanderv.*) remain a dead letter if the power of the workers from below and not from above (in parliament) is insufficient.<sup>92</sup> How does the autocracy fit into all of this? If K—v spoke in the sense that every bourgeois-legislative machine is incapable of defending the workers without the effort

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90 Possibly a reference to a peasant character in the 'ethnographic novel' of Fedor Mikhailovich Reshetnikov (1841–71), *The Podlipnaysans* (Reshetnikov 1985). Reshetnikov was a contributor to the influential pro-democracy cultural journal, *Sovremennik*, in the early 1860s.

91 See footnote 22 of this chapter.

92 Emile Vandervelde (1866–1938) was a founder member of the Belgian Labour Party and was first elected to the Belgian parliament in 1894. Clearly a reformist, he subsequently served as Belgian foreign minister and held several other cabinet positions from 1914 to 1937. The 'laws' in question are not clear, but the authors could be referring to the limited suffrage won by the Belgian workers in 1893 as a result of a seven-day general strike. It was on the back of this reform that Vandervelde was elected to parliament.

of the latter, then I think that all would agree with him, but to single out the autocracy is incorrect.

I beg that you refrain from counting such points of view among the philistine world-views and from suspecting moderation and orderliness in those cases where there can be no question of such a thing.

(signed)

Comrades with positions agreeing with the views expressed in this letter.

### The Letter of Mr. G

Now, I am going to write about those matters which do not strictly relate to the subject we have touched upon. We are dealing with people for whom and questions in which shades of thought, traditions, modes of expression and traditions of the past play a very decisive role. Since the time of my arrival here, I have been obliged to think a lot and to speak about these questions with N.N. and M.M. For a full understanding of their opinions and their relations to the cause, I want to explain their physiognomy to you. This way the question takes on a clearer form. N.N. is a young man, a former 'People's Justice' and 'People's Will' member who only recently came over to the side of Social Democracy. It should be recognised that he is a man distinguished by his original thinking and his skill in relating critically to all revolutionary traditions and opinions. The road of criticism, the road of negation is rewarding for an individual so rich in capabilities as him, but it is also slippery. He simply does not leave a stone unturned in his criticism of the established programmes of European Social-Democratic literature. His opinion on the history of Social Democracy is entirely different from the one established in German literature. The communism of Marx, the opinions of Lassalle, the tendencies emerging during the revolution of 1848 – all this takes on a very different colouration in his view. His basic opinion is that all ideological constructs of the revolution, all their distant goals, bear a clearly idealistic character. They therefore have little in common with the demands of the proletariat; at any rate they leave them far behind. In his opinion, the socialism of Marx and Engels is scientific in so far as it on the one hand presents a scientific critique of the existing capitalist system and on the other expresses the immediate demands of the working class. All their hopes for a rapid end to the capitalist system, all their prophecies of an approaching social revolution, are unscientific. In this connection he completely agrees with the view of Bernstein, recently expressed in *Die Neue Zeit*,

who states that, for him, the *Bewegung*<sup>93</sup> is everything in socialism and all the rest is of little interest, not entering into the realm of scientific investigation on the one hand, and not having any connection to the contemporary practical tasks of the working class on the other.

In his opinion, socialism is the defence of the interests of the proletariat in the very broadest sense. What the future will bring – this lies beyond the province of scientific cognition. For the moment we know only one thing. The workers of Europe need *Koalitionsrecht*,<sup>94</sup> broad political freedom, democratic reforms, a limit to the working day, increases in pay and so forth.

He is very much drawn towards the Belgian co-operatives, which were founded by the local Workers' Party. He reckons that the organisation of the working class on the basis of day-to-day interests (understood in a broad sense) should be the most immediate aim that the European Social Democracy sets itself. Without organisation there is no struggle of consequence, no nurturing of correct habits. In particular, co-operatives, which are not always class organisations, play a very powerful role in his opinion.

The ambition of many Social Democrats to seize political power in the immediate future, the hope that the contemporary proletariat, the majority of which is disorganised, will manage to elect a Social-Democratic majority to parliament, is a utopia. On the other hand, it is utopian and childish to put the socialisation of the instruments of labour in our programme and to talk about the *Zukunftstaat*.<sup>95</sup> He thinks, as does Bernstein, that capitalism has still got long to live and that a process of adaptation to new technical conditions is taking place at the moment. He thinks that the technical process in many branches of industry suggests not so much concentration as it does stagnation or even fragmentation. Therefore, to speak now about 'the death agony of capitalism', as many now habitually put it, is at best merely funny. Moreover, it is no less unscientific to speak of the future form of society. We can have no conception of this at the moment. Current information gives us few clues on this account, and we cannot predict all the changes in technology and relations of production which the future could bring to us. Science itself can only deal with facts and not with surmises. To base our programme on surmises is entirely ill-advised and can only lead to misunderstanding and disappointment. We can speak about the limitation of capitalist exploitation, speak even about (and

93 'Movement' (German).

94 'Freedom of association' (German).

95 'The state of the future' (German).

that is another question) its abolition, but only this. We do not have the right to speak about the form of this ideal.

Incidentally, his observations on the Belgian workers' movement are quite interesting. In his eyes, the working masses of Belgium appear completely different from the way they are habitually described to us. He breaks them down into three groups: the purely proletarian, the manufacturing workers and the petty craftsmen, graphically illustrating how little they have in common, how different their demands are, how different their relations are to political questions on so on. The conclusion he arrives at is that the contemporary workers' movement has very few common demands which can unite it and lead to the rapid fall of capitalism. Despite complete freedom of speech, assembly and association, we find a great mass of disorganised workers who are not much interested in politics and who have put forward only professional demands derived from the relations of production that prevail in one or another section of the working class. The local socialist intelligentsia has tried to direct them towards broad political struggle in order to give them a common interest for many years, but in the end all their efforts have come to nothing. The working masses only take that which is immediately necessary and which can be achieved at present from the revolutionary programme of the intelligentsia, rejecting and ignoring all the rest as an unnecessary idealisation. From this we can only draw the conclusion that the intelligentsia, if it wants to work successfully among the proletariat of any of the aforementioned groups, must study the basic principles of its relations of production, pick out its immediate demands and construct its immediate programme on this basis. Only such a programme can have success. Whatever the demands the socialist intelligentsia put forward in Belgium, if they are not rooted in the conditions of production and present social relations, they will never seriously stir up the masses and will never call them to struggle.

As a consequence of this conviction, talking to the working masses in Russia about the abolition of capitalism, about socialism and, finally, about the abolition of the autocracy, is in general absurd and it amounts to an unproductive waste of energy. We can talk about these questions in circles of course, and we can in the last analysis propagandise appropriately, but in no instance can we make these questions and demands the subjects of agitation and develop them in literature intended for the broad mass of the working population. That is why demands for the formation of a united opposition Party of all the revolutionary forces in Russia, and for the unification of the workers on the basis of agitational points concerning the abolition of the autocracy – demands such as those Pavel Borisovich presented in the afterword to the pamphlet



*On Agitation*<sup>96</sup> – are at the current moment so senseless. Prior to the workers themselves (a significant section of them) doing so, it is impossible to even think about it. The only thing possible is to awaken their consciousness on the basis of their everyday demands, to organise them, to raise the questions closest to them and gradually, in proportion to the development of their struggle, formulate those general demands which emerge on this basis.

It follows that we have to strictly distinguish between agitation and propaganda. One can agitate on subjects which have a chance of success and which can involve one or another section of the masses. With propaganda, which is usually limited to relatively small circles of people, we can allow whatever departures from the agitational programme you please, in so far as you do not talk about immediate needs, are dealing with a more developed public and, apart from that, are expounding scientific ideas which it is completely undesirable to restrict or castrate.

Thus, if we say we cannot speak about struggle with the autocracy, this does not mean we reject political agitation. If by 'struggle with the autocracy', political agitation is understood, in other words the posing of the demands of workers, the right of assembly, association and so forth, then perhaps we have nothing against it. I write 'perhaps' because agitating on this basis is currently possible only in several large and developed centres, such as Petersburg, Vilno, Warsaw and Kiev and, apart from that, the agitation here is going to take on rather more the character of propaganda. Thus, when struggle is spoken of, the question must be clearly posed of how it is to express itself. If it is to be expressed in political agitation on those points and on the scale that was discussed above, then it is impossible to disagree. But if we understand struggle in the same way as it is understood in Western Europe, in other words, the organisation of demonstrations, disturbances and the like – then it is ahead of its time, and impossible. What other forms of struggle do they speak about in Zurich? In Russia, many comrades also discuss and write much about political struggle, but nobody has plainly explained to me what it consists of or should consist of. The most correct question was posed by the Vilno group: in their proclamation, they stated that the only significant means of political struggle remains tireless broad, mass economic struggle, given that workers commit something forbidden by law in such cases and in this way present their urgent demands. By constructing secret unions and meetings, strikes, and by spreading the illegal word, the workers are actually carrying out political struggle. I simply cannot see another way.

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96 Kremer 1896.

You will be up in arms against the opinion that it is necessary to pose different demands in every group of workers, demands which sometimes contradict the ideals of Social Democracy. Arguing with this on a theoretical basis is difficult. But you have to recognise that if we adopt your point of view, then we will have to stop work among manufacturing workers. If you went against demands concerning the impermissibility of women working and the limitation of apprenticeships,<sup>97</sup> you would lose all influence among them. Among Lithuanian Jews it would be necessary to stop work given that many strikes and disturbances among workers have emerged on this basis. Take the great Edelshtein strike,<sup>98</sup> in which the intelligentsia played a very significant role – what was it provoked by? By the wish of Edelshtein to introduce women workers into the factory. In practical work we will be obliged, like it or not, to support this type of demand or turn our back on work and go over to an ideal proletariat, but where is this ideal? Where can we find this mass audience before which it would be possible to defend the very purest principles of Social Democracy? I do not know where it is. Analyse clearly the demands of all the German, French and Belgian *Gewerkschaften*<sup>99</sup> and you will see how distant they are from the demands of Social Democracy. It is easy for the leaders of the German Social Democracy or for Russian emigrants (please excuse the sharp expression) to talk about it, seeing as they are so far away from the economic struggle of the masses and they do not have to take any decision in practice; it is all very well to say ‘do not support temporary but less than ideal interests’; but is it feasible and do we have the right to do this? That is another big question...

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97 Here it seems that ‘Mr. G.’ is referring to a restriction of the number of new apprentices taken on rather than to the length of the apprenticeship, the former being seen as a way of maintaining wage rates among adult workers. As such, when he mentions ‘manufacturing workers’ (*manufakturnye rabochie*), it seems that he is referring to skilled workers who produced worked-up or finished articles such as clothing, footwear, metal work, pottery and so forth, as opposed to the unskilled ‘industrial’ proletariat, which produced articles using a highly refined division of labour. Of these two groups, only the former would require apprenticeships.

98 Edelshtein was a tobacco manufacturer from Vilno and the strike took place in 1895. Various contemporary sources cite between one hundred and three hundred and sixty participants. The strike was not successful and 70 participants were arrested. Leading participants were tried and gaoled for two weeks.

99 ‘Trade unions’ (German).

Dear B,

As regards the formation of a new Social-Democratic Party in Russia, I can only say that it was formed from socialist revolutionaries and worker-revolutionaries and that it bears a clearly political character and that it approaches the programme of Axelrod and Koltsov more than anything. It wants to take the autocracy by storm. In any case, both the empire-wide and the new ethnic-Russian party<sup>100</sup> have few forces and would have few forces even if they united. Moreover, groups not wishing to have anything to do with our cause in the organised sense remained in Piter and other places, considering it to be a nonsensical intrigue having nothing to do with the real state of affairs in Russia. However, I note that all of this is rumour, little of it is proven. For me, the only thing that is clear is that creating a party and a programme at the present is not very difficult. Whether it is a step forward is another question. However, we shall see . . .

The new apostle remains as good to me as before. His enthusiasms are not so terrible as it came across to you, and in my view it is even very useful for sobering up the 'politics' of various sorts. I am convinced that in the future he will be useful to us. Ask yourself – who does not have enthusiasms or theoretical extremes? It does not prevent us from working together and valuing that person as an active and sincere person.

We differ with him a little on the question of the necessity of introducing an organisational principle into programmes, in the sense of the organisation of all types of societies.

Not denying this in principle, we consider that he does not know the conditions in which the Russian proletariat live sufficiently well.

It is the same extremism as the one that brings political agitation and struggles to the forefront. Both are the fruit of theoretical exercises on the one hand and ignorance of the living conditions of the Russian proletariat on the other. In all the rest we have complete agreement, and this difference does not stop us working together . . .

Your G.

100 Once again, we have an untranslatable contrast between *rossiiskii* and *russkii* in this sentence. The first 'Russian' refers to the RSDLP, and the second almost certainly to a short-lived, rival Party project initiated by supporters of the journal *Rabochee Znamia*. This 'People's Will'-influenced group took a sceptical attitude to the 'economic agitation' and also opposed the idea that a Russian Social-Democratic Party should be empire-wide, forming close links with the nationalistic Polish Socialist Party, which it recognised as the only legitimate Socialist Party in the Polish territories.

### Reply to Axelrod's Pamphlet, 'On the Question of the Contemporary Tasks and Tactics of Russian Social Democracy'<sup>101</sup>

In 1885, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group published the *Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democrats*.<sup>102</sup>

This draft is reprinted here in the form of an appendix to two letters by Mr. Axelrod, one of the members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, letters which are also dedicated to programmatic questions. The appearance of this pamphlet *On the Question of the Contemporary Tasks and Tactic of Russian Social Democracy* obliges practical activists in the Russian workers' movement to pay special attention to programmatic and tactical questions and to finally move from drafts of the programme to the programme itself, more so because the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group has left its mark on Russian Social-Democratic literature published abroad. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group edits these publications. Should the programme of this group not correspond to the contemporary needs and tasks of the workers' movement, the latter would be deprived of the literature it requires.

The 'Emancipation of Labour' group has rendered an important service to the Russian workers' movement...<sup>103</sup>

But now, circumstances have changed somewhat. We now have to reckon not with an intelligentsia which is striving to find a material force for the realisation of its plans, but with the existing workers' movement, which is working-out its forms, its immediate tasks, its literature and finally its programme and tactics. A programme suitable for an intelligentsia who are 'going to the workers' is not suitable for workers themselves, who are defending their 'independent interests', whether intellectual or economic, legal or political. Indeed, we find the whole content of the workers' movement in this defence of workers' interests, regardless of the character of this defence and these interests. We therefore think that the 1885 *Draft Programme* of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group cannot become the programme of the Russian workers' movement. Life has outgrown this project. Conditions of place, border and time in 1885 made such a sharp impression on it that it does not correspond to the state of the workers' movement in Russia in 1898.

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101 There is an English translation of Axelrod's pamphlet in: Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 227–41.

102 Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 81–4.

103 Here the author makes several compliments which we leave out on the grounds of their superfluity, as it were [Plekhanov's footnote].

Indeed, this programme was worked out by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group at a time when there was no question of the organisation of a workers' movement in Russia. Axelrod starts his first letter with these words: 'Soon it will be 15 years since the Russian Social Democracy was born. Not in Russia itself, in the heat of a heroic struggle of a revolutionary Party with the government, but among a small group of emigrants'.<sup>104</sup>

Such an unnatural birth of the Russian workers' party – outside Russia, among emigrants – is highly characteristic. It shows that the Russian revolutionary movement had survived a sharp crisis during this time. We find the imprint of this crisis in the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Specifically, this programme, in the words of Axelrod, appeared as an answer to the question: 'where can we find the forces to renew the struggle with the autocracy and how can we lead this struggle with the greatest chances of victory?' (p. 4).<sup>105</sup> This is the answer: 'The formation of a workers' revolutionary party, the first task of which would be the overthrow of the autocracy' (p. 4).<sup>106</sup> In other words, the centre of gravity of the whole programme is not the interests of the working class, but the Russian revolution, the *Draft Programme* itself is not a programme of the workers' movement but a programme of the ongoing movement among the Russian revolutionary-democratic intelligentsia.

Naturally, this circumstance does not in the least signify the sacrifice of the proletariat 'to other social forces'; the intelligentsia does not constitute a social force. Nonetheless it deserves the most serious attention: 'The political organisation of the workers is not motivated here by the independent interests of the proletariat and not by the distant goals of socialism, but by the urgent necessity of such organisation for the immediate general-democratic interests of the Russian revolutionary movement, for the securing of the revolutionaries' success in the struggle against the contemporary state in the interests of the labouring classes in general, that is, in the interests of the peasant masses as well as the town proletariat... Undoubtedly for this group, the idea of the organisation of the working class in Russia is linked in the closest fashion with political and social tendencies and tasks which have inspired and continue to inspire all the democratic elements of our intelligentsia' (p. 9).<sup>107</sup>

104 See also: Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 227 (alternative translation).

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 230.

For the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the idea of the workers' movement in Russia is linked in the closest fashion with the revolutionary traditions of the democratic intelligentsia. But what about the workers?

Thus, in the interests of the working class, with the help of the working class – the ends and the means are thus drawn from the working class, but the intermediary between the ends and the means will nonetheless remain the democratic intelligentsia, Russian revolutionaries who define the needs of the working class at their own discretion, who by their own initiative set about organising the Russian working class. Obviously, the formula of the intelligentsia – everything for the workers and everything by means of the workers – does not entirely correspond to the thesis: 'the emancipation of the working class should be carried out by the working class itself'. The latter formula suggests that there is initiative among the workers and an understanding of their own needs and tasks. Contrary to this, Axelrod ignores the consciousness of the proletariat and its initiative. Precisely because of these circumstances it was possible for the 'Emancipation of Labour' group to first define the goal – the overthrow of the autocracy – and only then turn back to the means. At least the matter was formulated thus in Axelrod's programme and letters. Undoubtedly the most immediate consequences of such a presentation of the tasks of the workers' movement will be the anger of the workers against the 'yoke of the intelligentsia' and the rebellion of 'workers' thought' in defence of its independence from the tutelage of the intelligentsia.

Incidentally, the fact that the central point of the programme for our Russian comrades happens to be 'the independent interests of the proletariat' – and not the overthrow of absolutism – serves as an occasion for Axelrod to accuse them of political indifferentism. We think that this accusation is without foundation. It is without foundation because Russian comrades in practice, like it or not, have to reckon with that degree of consciousness of their interests on the part of the workers which has in reality already been reached by various groups of the working class in Russia. Every practical activist should build his agitation on the needs 'really felt by the working class', on the interests 'known because of local considerations'.<sup>108</sup> History is made by the masses<sup>109</sup> and therefore only the consciousness of the masses constitutes a historical factor.<sup>110</sup> Such a principle, which lays the basis for the so-called 'economic

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108 Axelrod [Prokopovich's footnote].

109 Plekahnov [Prokopovich's footnote].

110 A quick reservation – we are speaking about the organisation of the working class when it is consciously pursuing definite goals and not of the spontaneous movement of the

agitation', originates in the daily needs of which the working class are already conscious. This principle of economic agitation constitutes 'an axiom, a truth not demanding proof, expansion upon which would insult the developed reader' for Axelrod (p. 26).<sup>111</sup> Once the principle of building agitation on workers' consciousness of their interests becomes so axiomatic, is it not also the case that the specialisation of Russian Social Democrats in economic questions depends on the content of the consciousness of Russian workers? If this is the case, we cannot speak of indifferentism – on the contrary, one has to be surprised at the understanding and self-control of Russian comrades who have managed to preserve a sense of proportion in themselves despite the most dreadful political conditions. Only this restraint and self-control has permitted our Russian comrades to act as the true helpers of the workers in their struggles in defence of their interests.

Axelrod himself bears witness to the fact that the tactics of the Russian comrades were crowned with success. He tells us how young Social Democrats started to bring the doctrine of Marx to the working class *milieu* with the firm intention of preparing the elements of a future workers' party. By the middle of the 1890s, so many active (working-class) forces had gathered themselves around the Marxist youth and propagandised workers that it proved possible to go over to agitation among the masses. First of all, this took the one-sided form of supporting and organising economic struggle alone. In this way, the Russian Social Democrats transformed themselves from peaceful propagandists and enlighteners into an active revolutionary force. The strike movement in its turn, during the course of some two years, placed stirring layers of workers face-to-face with the autocratic government and managed to put forward questions about political rights (pp. 12–13, 18–19).<sup>112</sup> Undoubtedly, this tactic of the Russian Social Democrats did not emerge from their goals, it was rooted in reality itself. Both the forces and means necessary for the fulfilment of these tasks put forward by the Social Democracy were present in this reality. Do the forces and means necessary for the adoption of the tactics recommended by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group exist in Russian reality? In the draft of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, it is written: 'The struggle against

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masses, which destroys what exists at present because of its negative side but which does not have definite goals in view. We are not constructing historical schemes, but considering one factor in history – the organisation of the workers' movement [Prokopovich's footnote].

111 Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 240

112 Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 234, 236–7.



the autocracy is obligatory even for those workers' circles who consider themselves the nuclei of a future Russian workers' party ... These organisations, not being satisfied by partial clashes with the government, will not hesitate to go over to a general decisive attack on it at a suitable moment'.<sup>113</sup> So, an immediate and incessant struggle with the Russian autocracy! Is all this true regardless of how many 'roads' and 'forces' Russian reality suggests to us for the conduct of the struggle?

It seems to us that the main inadequacy of the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group consists in the fact that too much attention is given to the external relations of the proletariat, mainly to the government, whilst its internal relations are entirely ignored: the degree of organisational development in it, consciousness of its interests and so forth – in other words the 'independent interests' of the proletariat are ignored. This circumstance is explained by the emergence of the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group from the revolutionary traditions of the Russian intelligentsia.

The business of a military commander or a diplomat can only have success to the degree that real forces stand behind it. That real force in the workers' movement is represented by the degree of consciousness of their interests on the part of the working class and its degree of organisation. But consciousness, just like organisation, is not an accidental or arbitrary thing. Consciousness of their interests on the part of the masses, or one part of the working class, develops in accordance with definite laws and is dependent on the content and completeness of the social experience of the masses. Life constantly places before workers' consciousness new interests. The totality of social relations – economic, legal, political and so forth – defines which interests the workers can have, but does not define which of these interests the workers are already conscious of and which of them have come into their lives. With the help of social experience and daily practice, the consciousness of the working masses is constantly chasing after real social relations, never corresponding with them. Thus we need to make such a decisive and fundamental distinction between interests which 'we' (the intelligentsia) ascribe to the workers and the interests which they actually have. Because its development depends on conditions of time and place, the consciousness of the masses makes all attempts to force the natural course of the workers' movement fruitless.<sup>114</sup> At a certain

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<sup>113</sup> See Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 83.

<sup>114</sup> By the way, the fate of the programme of 1885 serves as evidence in support of this thesis. 13 years have passed since its first appearance and the Russian workers' movement has developed, strengthened and chosen its path having completely ignored its existence. In this way, the programme was submitted to that most severe of all possible criticisms: the

point in its development, this movement poses the question of political revolution. In this way, the overthrow of the autocracy relates to the independent interests of the working class as something partial and temporary does towards the general and permanent. Undoubtedly, the Russian workers' movement has revolutionary-political intentions. But the question is not one of whether it has numerous political tasks according to the current system of Russian life, but of the degree of its development at which these tasks can be introduced into its programme, can these tasks be realised – in other words, that of when the material forces for their solution will mature. We have all the more grounds for being patient given that so far the development of the workers' movement in Russia has been highly successful.

Workers' organisations develop in this same law-governed fashion. Their development signifies the growth of a consciousness of the shared character of interests, a consciousness which leads to a corresponding defence of their rights. Such consciousness of the content of their interests, consciousness of their shared character, which is expressed by one or another organisation develops proportionally to, and is dependent on, the entire totality of environmental conditions. In the West, fighting political and economic organisations were preceded by peaceful organisations. Fighting funds developed from mutual aid societies. Alongside mutual-aid organisations, various co-operatives (of producers and consumers), education societies and entertainment (mainly musical) societies all nurtured the ability to participate in societies, unions and organisations among the working class. All these types of organisation flowered and continue to flower among craftsmen. When the development of production led to capitalist exploitation of hired labour, workers had already acquired the habit of co-ordinating their actions. The emergence of a new interest and struggles with the employers also led to their 'common' satisfaction. This organisational spirit of the craft-working masses subjected to capitalist exploitation constitutes one of the main factors in the contemporary labour movement. Political organisations in which former craftsmen once again take pride of place as skilled workers followed on from peaceful organisations and unions of struggle. On the other hand, the mass of unskilled workers, the fathers and grandfathers of whom emigrated from the

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criticism of history. Now, after 13 years, some still recommend it, not having changed an iota of it. Is it really true that in these 13 years not a single change has taken place, neither in Russian life nor in the workers' movement itself? Or does the latter still represent a *quantité négligeable*? Of course it is possible to say 'so much the worse' for the movement which has ignored this programme, but, following this judgement, it will hardly change its tactics ... [Prokopovich's footnote].

countryside to the factories and the mines, have so far appeared as a predominantly unorganised, elementary mass in the West, not capable of that defence of its own interests which we find among the skilled workers. A slow, gradual but uninterrupted development within these peaceful organisations – mutual aid, entertainment, consumer and educational societies – promises to make so many reliable soldiers for the proletarian army, which at present appears to be made up of the descendants of craft workers, out of these unskilled workers. All types of organisation are important, but peaceful organisations which are occupied with those aspects of the life of a worker which teach social obligations and which make him act ‘in common’ with comrades are especially important. Fighting organisations capture the attention of the worker one-sidedly and extremely rarely – only at the moment of battle-readiness. Thus the educative role of fighting organisations cannot be compared to the educational role of peaceful ones in this sense.

And how does the Russian proletariat present itself in terms of consciousness? This is the opinion of Axelrod: ‘Having only recently started to distinguish itself from the serf state, the uncultured peasantry, it is still in the main too deeply sunk in general popular barbarism and ignorance to be in a completely independent state under absolutism, to be raised without incidental help to the height of a revolutionary force’. Further on, he speaks of the ‘low contemporary degree of intellectual and cultural development of the popular masses in Russia’ (*Tactics*, pp. 15–16).<sup>115</sup> ‘The working class has too little political knowledge and experience on the one hand and too few legal points of support on the other for collective action’ (*Die Neue Zeit*, 1897–8, No. 31, p. 147). Can this working class, profoundly sunk in general-popular barbarism and ignorance, with a low degree of intellectual and cultural development, lacking political knowledge and experience be called to political struggle with absolutism? We must acknowledge that we do not understand the logical link between this judgement of Axelrod regarding the Russian proletariat and that programme which is proposed by him.

However, we will now move from the sphere of opinion to the sphere of action. Do phenomena exist in our working class which show that there are already forces in the working class with which it would be possible to start a political struggle? So that it would be possible to go from ‘one-sided’ economic agitation to political agitation, to an attack on the autocracy? We see that there are no such phenomena and think that political struggle can only be included in the programme of the Russian Social Democracy when the forces and means

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115 See Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 234, where the translation of this passage differs somewhat from our own.

for this struggle will be at its disposal, when political struggle appears as a need 'actually being felt by the working class', interests 'known because of local considerations'. Otherwise, its programme would relate to the sphere of fantasy and not to reality. The programme should actually be an expression of what we do and should do, and not of what we dream of.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we must emphasise that what is written above could be taken to mean that Russian Social Democrats should stop touching on political questions in their propaganda. To attribute such meaning to our words would be mistaken.

The fact is, we should distinguish the content of propaganda from the content of our agitation in the most decisive way. Propaganda has the broadening of the world-view of the propagandised individuals as its goal, the communication of new reports to them which are capable of raising the level of their interests, their needs. With the help of propaganda we develop a consciousness of interests among those being propagandised; we bring this consciousness more into line with really-existing social relations. From this it follows that the propaganda of fantastic interests not corresponding to social relations can never be successful. The *intelligent* and the educated worker are useful to the masses (as propagandists) only in so far as they help them by means of their knowledge to analyse their surroundings, existing relations. But even propaganda of interests based in real relations is not always successful: propaganda is only one of the factors developing consciousness of their interests on the part of workers. This consciousness develops not just in regular proportion to propaganda, but mainly in regular proportion to the personal life experience of the worker. The consciousness of the workers is not like dough which 'we' (the intelligentsia) are called to shape in our own likeness and image. 'We' and 'our' efforts can only supplement that which life teaches the workers.

Conversely, with agitation we start from needs already existing among the individuals who are being agitated, from interests which are already recognised and which are already being sensed by them. The role of the agitator does not amount to proving that the position of a given individual can be improved; this is the business of a propagandist. The business of an agitator is to point out ways and means to somebody who already knows what he needs. The agitator uses the discontent existing in the masses and points out the practical means of obtaining the wished-for goal to them. The agitator, so to speak, gives a definite form to existing discontent or to protest that has already broken out. The summer strike of 1896 in St. Petersburg was characteristic in this sense. It started on 22 May, but the first proclamation appeared on 30 May. The workers themselves wrote and distributed the leaflets. Handwritten leaflets, copied out several times, were passed from hand to hand with great success. In

other cases, workers brought already-written leaflets to the agitators for printing, or supplied information requesting that leaflets be composed from it. In a word, all the initiative of the protest came from the working masses, and it only remained for the agitator to give a definite form to the existing protest or the protest being prepared. Such is the customary position of the agitator everywhere.

Just as the task of the propagandist is to bring people to a consciousness of their interests, the task of the agitator is to show people a way of satisfying needs of which they are already conscious. We insist on this difference because ignoring it always leads to that muddling of ideas which makes any successful discussion of programmatic and tactical questions impossible. As regards the individual incident discussed above, the distinction outlined between propaganda and agitation leads us to the following considerations on the question of political activity.

Since as early as 1896, the 'Unions of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class' have been conducting energetic political propaganda. This propaganda, which appears with the most modest content in terms of its political demands, is growing in breadth and depth. This situation shows that a basis already exists in the working class for propaganda. But up to now there has not been a single case of workers struggling for the political rights they need. Russian Social Democracy up to now has not even posed the question of the means by which workers can fight for their political rights. Such methods have so far not been pointed out to workers. Moreover, where at the end of the day are these methods? In the West they constructed barricades, organised demonstrations and political strikes, handed in petitions. Which of these methods does the 'Emancipation of Labour' group suggest to the proletariat in contemporary Russia? It is hard to relate seriously to a practical suggestion which is silent about the most important thing – about the material forces that would be capable of realising it and about the method by means of which it could be realised. As regards material forces, we know that they are 'profoundly sunk in general-popular barbarism and ignorance'. As regards the method, Axelrod remains stubbornly silent on this point. With this he deprives us of the possibility of comprehending the profundity of his thought. But we have every right to draw the conclusion that, up to now, nobody has seriously discussed the methods of direct struggle with absolutism, or has spoken about pointing out these means to workers.

Consequently, up to now there has been no political agitation in Russia and we suggest that for the moment there is no place for such agitation. (Of course we do not speak about spontaneous revolution which nobody can 'prepare for' in advance, we speak only of planned, organised struggle.) How much time will

pass before we will be able to pass over from political propaganda to political agitation? We do not know. Perhaps this moment will come in a year, perhaps in 10 years. Yet it is clear that none of the practical activists in the movement are seriously thinking about political agitation at the moment and it is clear that they do not consider it timely (see the incident with the demonstration in connection with the death of Vetrova;<sup>116</sup> *The Opinion of the Kiev Union of Struggle*.<sup>117</sup>)

Can we, given this state of affairs, introduce the direct struggle with the autocracy into our programme? It seems to us that we cannot. We have a workers' movement, but it has still not taken on a political character. The first of these concepts – the workers' movement – is broader both in terms of its volume and its content than the second – the politicised workers' movement. Where there is a constitutional form of government in which every citizen has the right and is obliged to participate in the election of deputies to a legislative assembly, the workers' movement inevitably bears a political character. Of course, by this we mean countries with general electoral rights. Countries with an autocratic form of government or high property qualifications are an entirely different matter. There, the workers' movement, at the first stage of its development, does not have a political character. Only in proportion to the development in the country of political life, in proportion to the growth of the successes of political propaganda and economic struggle in the working masses does the workers' movement start to take on a political character. Thus, the more free the country, the sooner the workers' movement becomes political; the more despotic the country and the weaker the development within it of political life, the longer the workers' movement will lack a political

116 Maria Fedos'evna Vetrova (1870–97) was a 'People's Will' activist who committed suicide whilst detained in the Peter-Paul fortress. Several weeks after her death (on 4 March o.s.), a demonstration was held in her memory in St. Petersburg and in other towns. The anniversary of her death was marked in a similar fashion for several years. It has not been possible to determine the nature of the 'incident' hinted at in the text passage, but the Kiev Union of Struggle appears to have discouraged workers from participating in the event in 1897.

117 This may be the title of a proclamation issued by the Kiev Union of Struggle opposing the Vetrova memorial demonstration. Such opposition is taken by the authors of the 'Answer' to reflect the view that such a 'political' demonstration was viewed as being 'too advanced' for the Kiev workers by the local Social Democrats, but any opposition to the demonstration does not have to be understood in this manner. The fact that Vetrova committed suicide as a political tactic could have provoked the opposition of the Social Democrats and they could have believed that there were better ways for prisoners to fight back against abuses in the judicial and penal system.

character. This is explained by the fact that the workers in the politically developed countries, who directly participate in the political life of the country, sooner become conscious of their political interests and directly defend them, whereas in politically backward countries, the absence of political life in all its forms denies them the possibility of directly defending their political rights. Naturally, political propaganda can begin very early in these politically backward countries, and the autocratic government itself always acts as the best propagandist of political ideas with its *gendarme* regime, but whilst political propaganda in the advanced, free countries almost immediately passes over into political agitation, to political action thanks to the conditions of political life, political agitation cannot in such a direct manner follow political propaganda in the despotic countries, thanks to the absence of the phenomena of political life in any form whatsoever. When the forces for political struggle mature in our worker's movement, they will not hesitate to show themselves and to show the agitator that his work should begin. 'Attacking' the autocracy is always possible, even when it does not correspond with the available forces and means. But what would such an attack lead to? Would the autocracy be required to expend much effort in order to crush such audacious daredevils?<sup>118</sup> Every unsuccessful attempt at political struggle holds back the accumulation of revolutionary forces. We do not have the right to construct a plan for our agitation on the basis of 'guesses' regarding what forces exist. The growing need within the working class for political rights and its growing readiness to enter into struggle with the government is impossible to hide or overlook. It should burst forth in one form or another and show that the moment for passing from political propaganda to political agitation has arrived. Just as economic agitation started only when the workers began a strike movement of their own volition (without the immediate participation of the intelligentsia), political agitation can only begin when the workers themselves start to fight the autocracy of their own volition (without the revolutionary bacillus of the intelligentsia). If we acted otherwise, we would give the Russian autocracy the occasion

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118 Axelrod, it seems, thinks otherwise. He suggests that several thousand St. Petersburg workers could overthrow the autocracy with a handful of energetic revolutionaries at their head. 'Were we to have a serious organisation of energetic revolutionaries (such as 'People's Will' or 'Land and Freedom'), which had acquired popularity among only a few thousand Petersburg workers, it would have a bigger chance of success in a military confrontation with the government than the Social Democracy would in Germany'. (*Soc-Dem*, v. 4, p. 26). By the way, the fact that we do not meet such a 'serious organisation' suitable for a military attack shows that the workers' movement is a mass movement not confined to the framework of a plot or a conspiracy [Prokopovich's footnote].



to snatch the best forces from our ranks, forces which are so necessary for the growth and development of the workers' movement. We should not permit attempts at unfounded political agitation for precisely the same reason we avoid *agents provocateurs*.

In this way, the interests of the Russian revolution itself compel us to limit ourselves for the present to political propaganda, whilst making all efforts to avoid political agitation.<sup>119</sup>

Consequently, there can be no place for direct-political struggle with the autocracy in the programme of the Russian Social Democrats, which corresponds to real life. There is only a place in it for political propaganda. In the interests of the future political struggle we should at all costs avoid a parody of it in the present.

One can object that this is a utopia. A rejection of the political struggle signifies a rejection of the workers' movement in general. Under a Russian autocratic government, no kind of workers' movement is possible any more than any serious improvement in the lives of workers is (*The Tasks of the Worker Intelligentsia in Russia*, p. 11). Consequently, in order to make a workers' movement possible, we must overthrow the autocracy.<sup>120</sup>

However, this is disproved by the successes obtained by the Russian workers' movement.

The strike movement gave us improvements in the material position of workers, factory legislation and fighting organisations in the working class. Peaceful – legal and illegal – organisations proliferate with every year that passes. In the last analysis, all the efforts of the autocratic government cannot destroy political propaganda.

What is more, all these forms of proletarian activity, which do not in themselves represent an immediate struggle with the autocracy, implicitly express it, *in zweiter Linie*,<sup>121</sup> as the Germans say. Indeed, the very growth of the number of peaceful organisations gradually creates the customary right to participate in them. The frequent recurrence of strikes deprives the bans on them of all the force existing in the Russian legal code. Political propaganda, which is expressed mainly through the distribution of illegal publications, makes the existing bans on the freedom of the press powerless. In the final analysis, all

119 We speak of organised, not spontaneous, struggle, in which there is no place for the agitator [Prokopovich's footnote].

120 This argument is consistently made by all fractions of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia who are fighting to improve the situation of one or another section of the 'labouring class' [Prokopovich's footnote].

121 'Secondarily'.

the forms of independent workers' activity gradually prepare the way for freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. In relation to this, the mass meetings of workers in out-of-town woods and forests are particularly interesting. In this way the practice of the contemporary workers' movement puts many limitations on freedom existing in the Russian legal code out of use. In order to illustrate these words, let us give two or three examples from the history of the workers' movement in St. Petersburg. These examples clearly show how the conduct of governmental bodies was changed under the influence of the workers' movement. At the time of the 1896 strike, Minister of Finance Witte<sup>122</sup> forbade factory owners from conceding to the demands of the workers, promising to defray their losses from public funds. At the time of the January strike of 1897, which had threatened to be of a similar scale to the summer version, the Minister of Finance already no longer banned factory owners from making concessions to the strikers. At the time of the summer strike, 7 June, municipal police and janitors<sup>123</sup> broke into workers' flats and dragged both male and female workers from their beds in order to bring them to the factory to 'work'. The workers retreated to wherever they could (attics, cellars), locked themselves in their flats and refused to let the police in. Straight after the strike, the governor of St. Petersburg published a new rule for the police force, in which it was noted: 'the help of the police is provided only when it is needed in situations defined by law, otherwise it will be unlawful intervention in another person's business... In these cases the ranks of the police would violate the holiness and inviolability of home and hearth and there would be an unauthorised eviction'.

Naturally, all these government concessions still do not amount to a constitution. They have a purely local character and are given out only as a result of the most energetic defence of their interests on the part of the workers. Moreover, these concessions are temporary as they will be taken back as soon as the workers' force of resistance weakens. The law has to apply these concessions to the working class as a whole and has to guarantee them to the workers.

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122 Count Sergei Iulievich Witte (1849–1915) was a notable modernising politician under Nicholas II who supported industrial development and limited social reform. In 1905 he advocated the creation of a constitutional monarchy and appears to have been the driving force behind the changes actually introduced during this period, such as the creation of an elected State Duma.

123 *Dvorniki*. These 'yard-cleaners' were to be found in blocks of flats and their duties involved keeping track of visitors, security, maintenance and the like. They were well positioned to act as informers, and would work with the municipal police to maintain social order. In the incident described, their access to keys probably facilitated the police raids. Their functions appear to have made them disliked by revolutionaries.

We do not exaggerate the significance of these concessions but we equally do not wish to underestimate them: they prepare the ground for the changing of the entire state system in Russia.

In this way, at the same time as the 'Emancipation of Labour' group has expended all its efforts on a direct struggle with the autocracy, our Russian comrades relate 'indifferently' to politics, having already for a long time conducted an indirect struggle with the autocracy. There have been no great victories, no noisy battles in this struggle. It has been the work of a mole which undermines the basic [word missing] of the political system. On whose side should justified sympathy lie: with a commander without an army who does not know the roads leading to the desired goals, whilst not ceasing to brandish paper sword over a period of one-and-a-half decades, or on the side of inconspicuous toilers who do the necessary work that is presented to it by real life, daily and without commotion or splendour?

To sum up: after the defeat of 'People's Will', the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia entered into a crisis. The questions were posed: 'where can the forces be found for the renewal of the struggle with the autocracy? How can we lead this struggle with the greatest chances of victory?' The 1885 *Programme* of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group was an answer to these questions. It turned the attention of the Russian democratic intelligentsia to the working class. This was the great service provided by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Of course, this programme was written for *intelligents* who wanted to be involved with the worker-question; it was not suitable for actual workers defending their own interests. Therefore it did not find acceptance in Russia. The organised movement among workers which rose up at the end of the 1880s bypassed this programme, ignoring its existence. The reasons for this are as follows: 1) the programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group does not pay the least attention to the degree to which the Russian workers are conscious of their interests; 2) ignoring the internal affairs of the proletariat, it concentrates all its attention on the proletariat's external relations with the government. The principles guiding the contemporary Russian workers' movement are laid out not in the articles of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, but in the pamphlet *On Agitation*.<sup>124</sup> These principles are directly opposed to the principles of the

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124 On the basis of these principles, we can formulate the immediate tasks of the Russian workers' movement in the following manner: 1) economic agitation; 2) organisation of workers in all possible types of societies and unions; 3) political propaganda. Literature, itself published abroad, should cease its discussion of a 'beautiful future' when we will 'overthrow the autocracy' and should assist the Russian comrades in fulfilling these immediate and urgent needs of the Russian workers' movement [Prokopovich's footnote].

'Emancipation of Labour' group outlined above. The question of the Russian revolution, of the 'overthrow of the autocracy', deserves special attention. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group demands a direct struggle with the government, not having considered where the material forces for this struggle are and not having indicated the road it should take.<sup>125</sup> The Russian comrades themselves, not entering into direct struggle with the autocracy, conduct one indirectly in that every demonstration of social independence by the working class in an autocratic state represents a step towards the rule of law. All these considerations cause us to speak out decisively against the recognition of the 1885 *Programme* of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group as a programme of the Russian workers' movement. This programme now, in 1898, so much the less corresponds to Russian reality and the tasks of the Russian movement than both in 1885 and in 1896.

In conclusion, a few words directed towards the enemies of the Russian workers' movement, who will consider the appearance of our article as a 'split' in the ranks of Russian Social Democracy. We advise these gentlemen to pay attention to how often we cited Axelrod in defence of our opinions. Naturally, in terms of the practical conclusions drawn from principles which appear 'axiomatic' both to him and us, there exists a big difference between us; but we are members of the same Party and unconditionally agree to submit to the resolution of the majority of the members of this Party. Whatever the character of our disagreements, they will disappear the day the programme of Russian Social Democracy appears. We are not a sect but a Party, and isolated disagreements cannot prevent us going forward hand in hand as part of a common cause.

### **Announcement of the Revival of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group's Publishing Activity**

Under the influence of all-consuming practical activity in the sphere of propaganda and agitation among workers, and the strong demand for popular publications aimed at the working masses, and in connection with attempts to defend so-called 'economic' materialism in the legal press, interest in literature dedicated to scientific-publicist work on the theoretical and practical ques-

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<sup>125</sup> This circumstance cannot be explained away as the result of conspiratorial goals, given that the programme does not talk about a conspiracy, but of a mass movement. The masses cannot act secretly. Is a secret strike really possible? A secret demonstration or a secret petition? [Prokopovich's footnote].

tions of Social Democracy in the Russian language has weakened to the point of extremity in recent years among the active elements of our movement. This phenomenon has sufficient justification in those circumstances which we have just hinted at. But together with them, it cannot but have a harmful effect on the ideological development of our movement. In Russia, less than anywhere in the West, can indifference towards the Social Democracy's theoretical interests go unpunished. The exclusive nature of the position of the Social Democracy and the extraordinary complexity of the tasks foisted on to it by this situation demands of it tireless self-criticism and vigilant attention to the theoretical side of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

It has acquired a dominant position in the sphere of the revolutionary movement in Russia. But at the very same time at its periphery – and even within it – a current directly contradicting the spirit of the Social-Democratic tendency's teaching was formed, which represented a serious danger to its future development. The more theoretically conscious of its active representatives and founders in Russia considered themselves 'obliged' to 'warn all comrades against this threatened perversion of Russian Social Democracy away from the path previously indicated by it, namely: the formation of an independent workers' political party that is inseparable from the class struggle of the proletariat and which poses the conquest of political freedom as its immediate task'. Not relying on the 'natural course of things' as the vulgar opponents of Marxism and, alas, its no less vulgar supporters understand it, the comrades who wrote these lines declare that 'Russian Social Democracy should declare decisive war on a whole range of ideas' on which the so-called 'purely economic tendency' in our movement depends.<sup>126</sup>

The members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group consider themselves obliged to respond to this call, issued by competent comrades, to all-out war against ideas and concepts circulating among us and under our own flag that are opposed in principle to Social Democracy.

A too literal, dogmatic and plain-vulgar interpretation of the doctrines of scientific socialism concerning the class struggle and the role of economic relations as the motive force of history served as the primary source of these ideas and concepts. On the basis of such an understanding of these doctrines, those distortions and perversions of Marxism multiplied and grew, and together they gave it a disorderly, repellent appearance, as similar as two drops of water to the caricature of it drawn by the Populists. The attitudes of the representatives of the economic tendency to the revolutionary movement of the 1870s and the start of the 1880s were highly characteristic.

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126 These are Lenin's words from the *Protest against the Credo*.

They took a much more negative attitude towards this movement than any of the practical or theoretical founders of Russian Social Democracy. But more than anything else their rejection was directed against the revolutionary part of the programmes of these earlier revolutionary factions, against those of their practical tasks and aims which formed an ideological link between them and our movement, thanks to which we appear as their historical successor. On the other hand, those of their opinions which were distinguished by a more or less reactionary character have been resurrected under a Social-Democratic label in the minds of the adherents of the 'pure workers' movement'.

As a result of all this, within Russian Social Democracy and under its banner, a 'range of ideas' emerged and gained currency, ideas that were both incompatible with the resolution of the question of means and incompatible with the working-out of tactics corresponding to those most immediate revolutionary tasks by which Social Democracy's right to exist, given the current level of Russian development, was largely determined. The point of view of the group or groups we are now talking about fails to permit not only the working-out of fully Social-Democratic tactics, but even the theoretical, *the principled posing of the question* of the political role and tasks of our movement.

Until now, however, so long as this tendency was driven in the ideological sense by theoretical incomprehension which arose on the basis of a simplified understanding of Marxism, it did not represent a serious danger and it could be permissibly viewed as an ephemeral sickness of the childhood period of Russian Social Democracy, which would vanish with its further growth. But the representatives of narrow and coarse 'Economism' in our movement are searching for theoretical support for themselves in the West, in the opinions of those 'critics' of Marxism, the standard-bearer and herald of whom is Bernstein and who, under the guise of 'reviewing the scientific basis of socialism, programme and tactics of the workers' movement', try to destroy this basis and to turn Social Democracy from a revolutionary class organisation of the proletariat to a semi-bourgeois, liberal-democratic party, with a pale-pink socialistic hue.

The initial opinions of the representatives of the anti-political tendency in our movement were opposed to the opinions of Bernstein on some crucial points. But sages were found who contrived to form their own peculiar ideological mixture out of these views and others and to make it into the theoretical basis for a principled struggle against the goal of organising an independent political movement among Russian workers. Enmity towards this goal is now no longer motivated by temporary tactical or proto-primitive pedagogical concerns, but by principles, by force of which the very idea of organising an independent workers' political party appears to be nothing other than a pernicious

utopia, 'the product of the introduction of alien tasks, alien results onto our soil'. The programme being recommended to us by the Russian Bernsteinians boils down to this: 'participation (assisting) the economic struggle of the proletariat and participation in liberal-opposition activity'. In other words: in so far as Social Democrats pursue, or want to pursue, social goals which do not issue directly from the sphere of sectional clashes between separate groups of workers with their direct exploiters, they should merge with that politically formless and unenlightened mass which is called liberal and semi-liberal 'society', and which is deprived not only of revolutionary but also of any liberal-opposition spirit that is in any way serious. Russian Social Democracy should therefore reject any revolutionary thoughts and activity and conclude its brief existence in precisely the same way as the Populist movement converted itself into a party of peaceful *Kulturträger*,<sup>127</sup> living and acting in the nooks and crannies of 'liberal society'. But the Populist movement can point to the glorious tradition of its revolutionary past, it did not appear on the stage of history as an opponent of modest, moderate, sober – in a word, philistine – liberalism for nothing. Russian Social Democracy too, which has in truth only for a short time appeared as an active practical fighting force on the field of history, would pronounce a death sentence on its recent past and on its future if, according to the advice of its false friends, it refused to pursue revolutionary tasks with revolutionary methods. Had it adopted the pitiful role which these 'friends' propose for it, its emergence into the world would not have cost it anything, but the efforts expended in order to obtain predominance over the remnants of the old revolutionary factions would not only have lacked any real justification, but would also deserve the appellation of a crime in the historical sense.

Anti-revolutionary Social Democracy is as meaningless as wet fire or dry water. Thus the 'range of ideas' in which our friends in Russia see the danger 'of diverting Russian Social Democracy from its intended path' is directed against the latter's very existence; their attainment of predominance among Russian Social Democrats would signify the death of our movement. Thus we find the fears of these comrades to be entirely well-founded and consider ourselves obliged, arm in arm with them, to come out against the opinions being propagandised by the Russian Bernsteinians. The struggle with them is a struggle for the existence of Social Democracy in contemporary Russia.

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127 'Vehicles of civilisation' (German), in other words, those who transmit cultural ideas from one generation to the next.



From what has been said so far, it is self-evidently clear what tasks and goals the 'Emancipation of Labour' group should set itself in reviving its literary activity.

When we raised the banner of Social Democracy in the Russian émigré press at the start of the 1880s, our tasks were determined in advance by the fact that there was still no Social-Democratic movement in Russia at that time, the fact that for its emergence it was necessary to first of all pave the way for it theoretically, and the fact that the main ideological obstacle or stumbling block for it were the illusions of the radical intelligentsia in terms of the direction of and perspectives for our economic development, and the negative attitude of that same intelligentsia to the socio-economic and revolutionary significance of the nascent Russian proletariat. From this it is clear whether or not it was desirable to give priority to polemics with every shade of Populist in the publicist literature of the group. It was not enough to lay out and popularise the basic positions of Social Democracy. It was also not enough to explain and prove their applicability on Russian soil by means of an analysis of the course of economic life in Russia. It was necessary beyond that to conduct an almost daily struggle with the dominant democratic factions that existed in the 1880s over the workers' movement's and Social Democracy's right of citizenship in Russian reality. Now that this struggle has ended with the victory of the Social-Democratic banner, now that the worker's and Social-Democratic movement has become a real factor in Russian life, the existence of which no healthy-minded individual can deny, because of this, the polemic with the Populists has already lost its previous revolutionary significance and cannot occupy such a visible place in the Social-Democratic press as in the course of the first decade following the foundation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.

At the current time, the question of the interests and the tasks, in general the further development of the Social-Democratic movement takes priority in the Social-Democratic press; this movement already exists but its existence is threatened from within by separate individuals or groups who formally, or in name, adhere to it. From this point of view, one of the most important tasks of our literature appears to be a merciless critique of Bernsteinian and other anti-revolutionary tendencies which have found shelter in the camp of Social Democracy itself. From this same point of view, we believe that, at the present moment, the Social-Democratic press should be obliged to put forward and emphasise those aspects and those practical aims which are common both to our movement and to revolutionary Populism. We will be guided by those same considerations in our evaluation of all the important phenomena of Russian reality. In the past decade, and even partially at the beginning of the 1890s, it was necessary to dedicate much space in our press to proving that

capitalism had sunk profound roots in Russia and that, parallel with its development, there was the growth of a proletarian class. To prove this now would be a sufficiently naive anachronism on our part seeing that all our radical intelligentsia almost without exception recognises that economic reality entirely guarantees the viability of the Russian workers' movement, and that it does not doubt the fact that it did not doubt it from time immemorial. We repeat: the main theoretical obstacle to the further development of our workers' movement on the basis of Social Democracy now lies within it, in the anti-Social-Democratic opinions being propagated under its flag. It is necessary for the Russian Social-Democratic press to pay particular attention to this regrettable fact at the present time, and thus for it to place before itself a completely new task which did not exist for the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in the first period of its activity. This is the task: irreconcilable theoretical struggle with the anti-revolutionary elements in our Party and the elucidation of tactical tasks, tasks which are suggested to it both by its final goal and the socio-political peculiarities of the given moment.

We want to believe that our activity will, if only partly, assist the fulfilment of this new, extremely important task.

P Axelrod  
G Plekhanov

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### *For Sale*

Letter to the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* – Pavel Axelrod

### *In Press*

New Publication of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, translated and with a foreword, by G Plekhanov

### *Being Prepared for Press*

Georgii Plekhanov, *A Critique of Our Critics, Part One*. The Philosophical exercises of Messrs. Bernstein and Struve

*The Red Banner in Russia*. A sketch of the history of the workers' movement with a foreword by P Axelrod

Georgii Plekhanov, *Once More Socialism and Political Struggle*, (Critique of the Programmes of *Rabochaia Mysl'* and *Rabochee Delo*)

For all business regarding the publications of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group, please write to Pavel Axelrod: Zurich, 9 Vogelsangstrasse.

The 'Emancipation of Labour' group warmly thanks the American comrades for 700 francs sent by them last year and for 1,500 francs received from them this year. This support is especially valuable to it, given that it is offered during a sad and confusing time at which Russian Social Democracy finds itself in danger.

#### APPENDIX

### **The *Protest* of the 17: Editorial Comments in *Rabochee Delo***

We welcome with all our heart this decisive protest of our Russian comrades against the views laid out in the *Credo*, this attempt to pervert the true character of the Social-Democratic movement in the West and in Russia. But we are firmly convinced that this 'symbol of faith' represents nothing more than the opinion of solitary individuals and a confusion of ideas in the heads of its authors. Such opinions testify only to a lack of scientific and revolutionary political understanding on the part of these young wiseacres.

The authors of the *Credo* reveal a sad misunderstanding of the political tasks of the workers' movement, ignoring the indissoluble link between the economic and the political struggle of the working class, especially in countries such as Russia, and falsely estimating the correspondence between the struggle by workers for their immediate interests and the final goals of the Social-Democratic movement.

In Russia, where every strike, mutual fund, meeting and workers' organisation – every step of the working class on the road to conscious and organised activity – is either a political or a common crime, where because of this, the struggle for immediate economic demands inevitably leads to a struggle with the government for political rights in the name of the vital interests of the working class, to say, in autocratic Russia, that we have the 'possibility' of exclusively economic struggle and that 'discussion of an independent workers'

party is in essence nothing more than the consequence of transferring foreign tasks' onto Russian soil – this means falling into a radical delusion as to the character and ideas of the Russian Social-Democratic movement.

To say that 'the constitution of 1848 was won by the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie' and that 'almost everywhere in the West, the working class did not conquer democratic institutions – it took advantage of them' is only possible if one does not have the necessary understanding both of the role of the Western-European proletariat in revolutions, and of the great uninterrupted struggle of the Social Democracy both for political rights and for the freedom of working people, a struggle which it conducted from the moment of its emergence and which is still conducted by the workers' parties of all countries.

Our Russian comrades have provided a heap of evidence to show that the workers' movement in Russia has always regarded the conquest of political freedom as its most immediate task and that the 'way out' for Russian Social Democracy consists not in 'participation in liberal-oppositional activity' but in the foundation of a united, independent workers' party for economic and political struggle. We note in support of this argument the facts of the most recent period: the programme-pamphlet *Contemporary Russia*,<sup>128</sup> *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats* and *The Workers' Cause in Russia*<sup>129</sup> published by the Union in the past two years and written by activists from the workers' movement inside Russia itself. Finally, take the publication by the local

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128 Martov 1898. This is a survey of Russia's recent economic and political history, which discusses the consequences of the 'liberation' of 1861 and more recent (1892) famine and industrialisation. The working-class movement is discussed in this context, its connections with older revolutionary parties in the 1870s and strike movements dating from this era up to the time the pamphlet was written. Martov argues that these industrial movements bring workers into conflict with the autocracy as a matter of course as workers demand economic improvements. As such, the pamphlet could be said to lean somewhat towards 'Economist' tactical thinking.

129 Martov 1899. This popular pamphlet explains the significance of the foundation of the RSDLP and articulates its final goal as the abolition of the capitalist system and its more short-term goal as the conquest of democracy. It then articulates a series of immediate 'economic' goals for the workers' movement, such as the reduction of the working day, the abolition of night-work, protection of female and child workers, welfare, public housing and so forth. Martov then discusses some immediate political demands: freedom to strike, to hold meetings, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. He connects these goals with the need to thoroughly and radically democratise the state, basing the political system on universal suffrage, equality before the law and individual civil rights, whilst also describing reforms to the civil service, education, the army and the courts. He argues that on this basis, the most open political struggle of the urban and rural working class against the capitalists can take place.

committees of the Russian Social-Democratic Party of this year's May Day proclamation (distributed among the *broad mass* of workers) and you will see a whole list of immediate political demands, starting with the establishment in law of a 10-hour working day and ending with the demand for public-jury trials for activities relating to strikes, the abolition of administrative exile and arbitrary detention without trial, the right to establish mutual funds, the right to strike, to attend meetings and to form unions.

And after this, the young wiseacres want to convince us that the motto of the workers' movement is 'fight for economic conditions' exclusively and that the struggle of Russian Social Democracy, as an independent workers' party, for political freedom is 'transferring foreign tasks'!

Consequently, the fear of comrade Axelrod, expressed by him as the first 'possible perspective', does not have a serious basis in the actual course of the Russian workers' movement any more than it did in 1897.

Since the broad strike movement of the second half of the 1890s, the great struggle (1896–7) of the St. Petersburg weavers and the victory of the workers over the government – which compelled the legal reduction of the working day in Russia – it has been hard to think that 'the workers' movement does not leave the narrow channel of purely economic clashes between workers and bosses and in itself lacks a political character'. Nor is the basis of the gloomy fears of comrade Axelrod demonstrated, in our view, by the mere 'possibility' of such a 'programme' as the above-printed *Credo* 'appearing'. Such 'programmes' are most likely the private fantasies of political infants (though they be of age in reality), which have appeared and will continue to appear so long as Russian Social Democracy has not attained a united opinion on the basic tasks of the workers' movement in Russia through the working-out of a definite programme and definite tactics for the Party. When this is done, all will know the true value of 'programmes' of the *Credo* type, and only then will the political impostures of separate individuals and little groups – the outstanding fruits of our 'wavering' between ideas expressing the real character of the workers' movement and 'symbols of faith' composed by new trends in Russian Social Democracy – become impossible.

Therefore we support with all our hearts the appeal of our Russian comrades for all Social Democrats 'to direct all their efforts toward a decisive strengthening of the Party, towards the working-out of the Party's programme and towards the renewal of its official press organ'. On our part, we promise the Russian comrades that we will do everything required to assist in the completion of these most urgent tasks of the Social-Democratic workers' movement in Russia in the shortest space of time.

In conclusion, it is with pleasure that we subscribe to the key proposition of our Russian comrades that all groups of Social Democrats and all workers' circles in Russia discuss the above-printed *Credo* and the resolution directed against it, and request that members of organisations send *decisions* taken by these organisations as well as separate articles on questions of the Social-Democratic programme and tactics to be published in *Rabochee Delo*, the press organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats. The all-sided discussion of these questions in the press is the best remedy against various 'vacillations of thought'.

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.

Address of the Editorial Board for Ordinary and Financial Mail,  
Correspondence, etc.

(not sent directly from Russia, only from abroad):

M Marcel Landrieu  
20, Rue de la Montagne Ste. Geneviève,  
Paris.

## Documents of the April 1900 RSDLP Congress Attempt

*According to an account written by Martov many years after the event,<sup>1</sup> two members of the Union Abroad, Zemah Koppelson and the Rabochee Delo editor Pavel Teplov, began a tour of the local RSDLP organisations early in 1900, promoting plans for a Second Congress of the Party which had the potential to re-establish the Party's leading bodies and organisational apparatus. As has already been indicated, one motive which gave urgency to this campaign was the organisers' wish to resolve the conflict between the émigré supporters of Rabochee Delo and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in a manner sympathetic to the former, using the authority of a Party Congress. The campaign for a Congress was taking place following a claim by Plekhanov on the assets of the Union Abroad, which the 'Emancipation of Labour' group had contributed when the Union was set up, prior to its being converted into the RSDLP's émigré organisation. In calling for a Party Congress, the 'Economists' therefore appeared to be conducting a manoeuvre against this claim, reckoning on the support of the Bund and Iuzhnyi Rabochii at the proposed meeting for a declaration of some sort against Plekhanov's pretensions. Apart from that, a perusal of Martov's account suggests that they hoped the few supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group active in Russia could be induced to break with their émigré leaders and to join this new alliance around Rabochee Delo once it claimed the title of the RSDLP for itself.*

*Though this episode has received little attention in historical accounts touching on the early development of Russian Social Democracy,<sup>2</sup> a few documents relating to it can still be located. Apart from the 'draft memoir' of Martov just mentioned, which gives an account of negotiations between the 'Economists' and a group around Lenin concerning the conditions under which the latter would consent to serve as the Editorial Board of a relaunched Rabochaia Gazeta, there is also an announcement of the intended Congress that was circulated among local RSDLP organisations, and a series of draft*

1 See Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 4, pp. 49–61. A translation of the relevant section of this document appears below.

2 By way of exception, it is briefly acknowledged in: Tobias 1973, p. 182; Volin 1973, p. 44; Tarnovskii 1983, p. 59 and Service 1985, p. 87.



resolutions is appended to it.<sup>3</sup> Some of these resolutions are of particular interest as they appear to set out the views of the 'Economists' regarding the next steps in the development of the RSDLP in programmatic and organisational terms, particularly those of the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group,<sup>4</sup> whose main organiser, Abram Moiseevich Ginzburg (1870–1937) appears to have been their author.<sup>5</sup>

The first of them deals briefly with programmatic questions, noting the need for a minimum programme of concrete demands and suggesting that a draft set of demands be prepared by the Congress itself for circulation and discussion. However, the question of the overall goal of the Social-Democratic movement, the character of its socialist 'final goal', and so forth, was evidently not to be part of this discussion, even though such matters had scarcely been resolved in the Party prior to this point and even though such questions had been raised in the 'Announcement' in *Rabochee Delo* No. 5.<sup>6</sup> The reasoning

3 Potresov and Nikolaevskii (eds.) 1967, pp. 316–22. A translation of these documents appears below.

4 *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* was an irregularly appearing newspaper published by the Ekaterinoslav Committee of the RSDLP from 1900–3, which throughout its history appears to have vacillated between a pro-'Economist' and pro-*Iskra* position in an attempt to secure its continued independence as a regional press organ. Twelve issues were produced by an Editorial Board subject to frequent changes owing to arrests. Up until August 1902, its factional sympathies lay predominantly with the Bund and *Rabochee Delo*, and together these three organisations supported a reworking of the RSDLP constitution approved at the Party's First Congress in a 'federalist' direction, the aim being a series of powerful regional 'Central Committees' and newspapers, but a weak Party centre (see Chapter 5 of the present collection). At this stage, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* was prepared to defer to *Rabochee Delo* in programmatic matters, a preference fairly clearly indicated at the Belostock Conference of March 1902, another failed attempt at a Second RSDLP Congress.

A short time prior to this meeting, in January 1902, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* had helped form a regional association, the 'Southern Union of Committees and Organisations of the RSDLP', which represented an attempt to put the 'federalist' organisational views described in the draft resolutions printed below into practice. However, this organisation was smashed by a police raid in the spring of 1902, and later in the year *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* declared its adherence to *Iskra* principles. This new loyalty turned out to be problematic, given Lenin's support for a centralist rather than a federalist Party structure, and the desire of most *Iskra* supporters to dissolve regional and local newspapers and to merge them with *Iskra*. *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* came to the Second RSDLP Congress with the aim of preserving its independence, but it was dissolved anyway by a majority vote. Despite this, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* supporters were crucial in securing the development of a 'soft' variant of *Iskra*-ism which went on to become Menshevism, a variant which supported the basic world-view articulated in the *Iskra-Zaria* programme but which opposed Lenin's organisational methods.

5 See Potresov and Nikolaevskii (eds.) 1967, p. 316.

6 See Chapter 3 of the present collection.

*behind this decision is far from clear, as it could be the product of a disregard for 'final goals' in general terms, following the criticisms of this type of thinking raised by both Prokopovich and Bernstein, or simply due to the absence of people sufficiently competent to carry out this type of theoretical work who were not supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group.<sup>7</sup> One further possibility is that the silence on theoretical questions could simply have been viewed as an attempt to avoid needless controversy between 'revisionist' and 'orthodox' views, which may have been perceived as having the potential to distract from the practical work of organising leading institutions and an organisational apparatus for the RSDLP.*

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7 It was not widely known at this stage that it was Petr Berggardovich Struve (1870–1944) who had composed the original *Manifesto* of the RSDLP, and this ignorance may have prevented the Congress organisers from approaching him for a more detailed political statement. Struve attended Social-Democratic meetings whilst studying at St. Petersburg University during the early 1890s and in 1894 published an academic defence of Marxist economic thinking, *Critical Notes on the Economic Development of Russia*, which the censor allowed to be published, probably on the grounds that it criticised Populist ideology and did not draw explicitly revolutionary conclusions from the argument that Russia had already become capitalist. Thus the tradition of 'legal Marxism' was begun in Russia: the academic discussion of the doctrine shorn of most of its revolutionary and political implications. This said, Struve did publish an anonymous 'open letter' to Nicholas II at the time of his coronation, urging reform on behalf of the *zemstva*.

He subsequently represented the Russian Social Democrats at the 1896 Congress of the Second International alongside Plekhanov and in the late 1890s he edited a couple of short-lived but legally-permitted journals dedicated to 'legal Marxism', *Novoe Slovo* and *Nachalo*. It was on the basis of this record that he was asked to draft the *Manifesto of the RSDLP* that was approved at the Party's First Congress in 1898, though he did not attend the meeting. Shortly after this, Struve began to publish articles increasingly critical of Marxist ideas in the spirit of Bernsteinian revisionism. Nonetheless, Struve and his co-thinker, Mikhail Tugan-Baranovskii (1865–1917), met with literary groups around Lenin in the spring of 1900 in Pskov to discuss co-operation on *Rabochaia Gazeta*. Initially agreeing to provide articles and funds as representatives of liberal-democracy rather than Marxism, this agreement ultimately collapsed, Struve eventually arranging with Plekhanov to create an independent liberal-democratic newspaper, *Sovremennoe Obozrenie*, which would be allied to *Zaria* alongside *Iskra*. However, Struve was arrested in March 1901 having attended a student demonstration in St. Petersburg, and nothing came of this project.

Subsequently, Struve helped create the liberal-democratic journal, *Osvobozhdenie*, and the 'Union of Liberation', which served as forerunners to the Constitutional Democratic ('Cadet') Party, and he was a founder member of this party in 1905. He broke from the Cadets in 1916 over the latter's critical attitude towards the Russian government in wartime, and after the October Revolution played a most active role in the White movement, supporting military uprisings against Bolshevik rule. Struve left Russia for good in 1920, having witnessed a series of military defeats and moved to Paris, where he spent the rest of his life.

*The third resolution on the form the new apparatus of the RSDLP should take is far less ambiguous, recommending a sharp change with the organisational forms agreed at the First RSDLP Congress. This First Congress had approved a broadly centralised Party structure, in which a Central Committee and Party newspaper was to lead a group of subordinate local organisations, each of which, with the exception of the Bund, was based in a large urban area. The Bund, by way of exception, was allowed to maintain its separate press and separate central apparatus, owing to the fact that many of its members did not speak Russian, but Yiddish, and because this membership was scattered around numerous small- and medium-sized towns in the Pale of Settlement rather than being concentrated in one big city, as was the case with the 'Unions of Struggle'.<sup>8</sup> However, in the two years since this First Congress, it became clear that the Bund was the most well-established of the RSDLP's founding organisations, partially owing to the raids which had ruined both the Party's central bodies immediately following the Congress itself and which had also severely damaged the local Social-Democratic organisations, some of which were already in a weakened state.<sup>9</sup> These developments appear to have convinced Rabochee Delo that a reorganisation of the Party was necessary, so that independent regional organisations such as the Bund could form the basis of the Party apparatus. Accordingly, regional centres were planned in all areas, complete with their own newspapers, central committees, internal discipline and independent finances. Corresponding to these changes, the role of central bodies such as the Party Congress, the Party Central Committee and the Party newspaper would be reduced in terms of their significance.*

*Rabochee Delo's support for such revisions to the RSDLP organisation can up to a point be attributed to a somewhat simplistic pragmatism, the perceived organisational successes of the Bund being imitated without due reflection being given to the specific social and economic conditions of the Russian and Ukrainian factory proletariat, which differed greatly from those of the Jewish handicraft workers. In this sense, Rabochee Delo could be said to have ignored the issue of the greater concentration of the Russian workers in huge cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the benefits frequently emphasised by their opponents of an organisation-building strategy which focused all recruitment efforts on the factories, rather than on smaller and more rural enterprises.<sup>10</sup> However, imitation does not appear to be the only motive behind turning the Party from a centralist to a federal*

8 See Chapter 13 for a list of towns in which the Bund was active, as well as Piatnitskii 1933, pp. 15–33 and see Akimov 1969c, p. 222 for indications of how each of these 'centres' branched out into smaller towns.

9 See Akimov 1969c, p. 302; Angarskii (ed.) 1930.

10 See, for example, Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, p. 330.

organisational structure. The group around Lenin in particular associated support for centralist structures with support for a revolutionary programme and support for organisational federalism with the 'Economist' trend, partially because the more immediate, concrete 'economic' demands supported by the 'Economists' evidently varied quite sharply from region to region, whereas the autocratic political conditions, with the exception of territories such as Finland and Poland, were broadly similar.<sup>11</sup> In his draft memoir, Martov also refers to an organisational gradualism corresponding to the 'stagist' tactics advocated by the 'Economists' in the sphere of agitation in which a federal structure was seen as an intermediate stage between disconnected local organisations and a united, centralised Party.

The role of Rabochaia Gazeta in the proposed Party structure is intriguing, more so in that, according to Martov, he, Lenin and Potresov were the favoured candidates of the Congress organisers for the Editorial Board of this newspaper. According to Rabochee Delo's plan, the newspaper was clearly to be dependent on the powerful regional organisations, who were to fund it and arrange for its distribution, despite having press organs of their own. At the same time, the newspaper was expected to offer ideological and theoretical leadership to the RSDLP more or less independent of any supervision, and it was probably for this reason that Lenin was willing to accept the offer of editorial posts made by the Congress organisers. This said, the fourth resolution makes it clear that Rabochaia Gazeta was to exist alongside 'popular' newspapers directed at ordinary workers and Rabochee Delo, the latter serving as a purported theoretical journal of the Party. This arrangement only drew attention to the 'Economist' preferences of both the Congress organisers and the regional organisations themselves, as the presence of such newspapers seems to imply an orientation towards workers with little political consciousness, a feature of 'Economist' tactics. This situation strongly suggests that the proposed Lenin-Martov-Potresov Editorial Board for Rabochaia Gazeta would end up being held accountable to its 'Economist' opponents and it is therefore understandable that the proposed editors were a little wary of the offer. In the event, Lenin negotiated hard to ensure that editorial responsibilities would not be used as a tool to separate three leading supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in Russia from their allies in the emigration.

The remaining resolutions are not very well-developed, but it is interesting to note that the organisers acknowledge the ongoing existence of the RSDLP in the second resolution, despite the collapse of its central institutions. This perspective was subsequently reaffirmed at the Belostock meeting of March 1902, another ill-fated attempt on the part of the 'Economists' to organise a Party Congress, but was subsequently challenged, seemingly for the first time, during the prepara-

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11 See, for example, Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 323–30.

*tions for the actual Second RSDLP Congress in early 1903.<sup>12</sup> This apparent change of opinion on the part of the Bund was not shared by the rest of the RSDLP.*

*The proposed Congress did not take place owing to arrests. A meeting was arranged in Smolensk in April, but in the event, only Koppelson and two representatives of the Bund's Central Committee attended.*

# 1

With every year, the quantitative growth of the Russian workers' movement and its qualitative growth in complexity, the growth in the size of territory encompassed by it and the manifold needs provoked by this growth all the more urgently point to the necessity of a common party organisation.

In the big industrial centres the proletariat long ago outgrew the elementary form of purely occupation-related strike struggles. Clashing with the oppressive regime of tsarist despotism every time it stands up for its immediate economic interests, the Russian working class is becoming all the more profoundly imbued with a consciousness of its own lack of rights with every day that passes, and is more and more clearly beginning to understand the need for creating free political forms. Political protest and political self-awareness is ceasing to be the exclusive property of small groups of agitators from the worker-intelligentsia. The movement is taking on a Social-Democratic character and the proletariat is coming of age politically. It should form its own unique, independent political party with its own special programme: it should subordinate its struggle for political rights to one party organisation.

The Russian Social-Democratic worker-intelligentsia should, through the organisation of a Workers' Party, hasten the conquest of a democratic constitution and secure further successes for our working class in the sphere of social legislation and international unity.

Two years ago, the Russian Social Democracy recognised these views as guiding principles in the struggle with capitalism and absolutism in the form of the March Congress.<sup>13</sup> But thanks to the rabid persecution of the tsarist government, the newly formed Party was more or less an abstract principle, which was not brought to life and which clearly did not have great practical

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 14 of the present collection.

<sup>13</sup> This was the First Congress of the RSDLP, which took place on 1–3 March 1898, O.S. in Minsk. For a translation of the documents of this meeting, see Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 223–6.

significance.<sup>14</sup> Many saw in a Party which had grown out of the most urgent demands of the Russian revolutionary movement only the enterprise of a small group of intellectuals separated from the masses, which was fascinated by big plans and which slavishly copied the methods of the German Social Democracy: it seemed like idle sounds and empty boilerplate on the cover of an émigré journal.

Meanwhile, in the minds of the best of the Russian revolutionaries who had escaped the wild persecution of the tsarist *bashi-bazouks*, the Party everywhere proved to be a living, practical cause which was organically linked to the growth of our movement and which advanced nothing other than the day-to-day, practical, revolutionary struggle.

If these opinions as to the situation of the workers' movement in Russia appear too optimistic to some, then one can hardly find many active Social Democrats who will deny that such a unification of all revolutionary forces would be of great practical significance in the sense that it would improve the technical circumstances of our movement.

Anybody more or less familiar with the situation of our movement can easily recognise how great a brake on it is the absence of a common Party organisation. Whether it is a question of a good Party-press organ or good propagandist and agitational literature, whether it is a question of the organisation of common political protests and demonstrations, or participation in the international business of the proletariat, or disagreements on questions of programme and tactics – everywhere the absence of a leading central newspaper is recognised as an inadequacy. Our publishing work functions so badly that we have to receive four-fifths of our literature from abroad, literature which is limited and out of date, and our transport network is so poorly supplied that the permanent literary famine has turned chronic in all our organisations, from the Neva to the Urals and from the Baltic Sea to the Black.

There is no possibility of investing this responsibility in any particular local organisation, regardless of how solid it may appear, and we hope that there is no need to prove that the only rational way out of this difficult situation can be the concentration of forces and the division of functions – in other words, the organisation of a united federation. The constant raids that take away the best forces from among active Social Democrats, destroying organisations one after

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14 Perhaps significantly, the authors of the invitation do not refer to the organisational rules approved by this First Congress (Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 225–6). It is unclear whether they were aware of these rules, but they would evidently have been radically revised had the intended 'Second Congress' gone ahead and completed its work in the manner intended by its organisers.



the other, compels all revolutionary groups to be on the lookout for all-Russian as opposed to local interests without exception.

Needless to say, a central technical organisation can at the present time only take the form of a political party.

We therefore propose to all our comrades for whom the cause of struggle is dear to take the first practical step on the road towards realising the cause of the RSDLP organisation, a cause bequeathed to us by the participants in the First Congress.

We invite all Russian Social-Democratic workers' organisations to send to Congress their representatives for a *colloquium* concerning this, the most burning question in the current situation.

Having taken upon ourselves the organisation of the Congress, we additionally make bold to suggest the following programme for the Congress to comrades.

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1) First and foremost, the Congress starts from the position that the basic principles developed in the *Manifesto* of the RSDLP remain unconditionally true when applied to the Russian revolutionary movement. The Congress believes in the political mission of the Russian proletariat and considers the best means for its successful completion to be the organisation of an independent workers' political party and therefore excludes from its agenda all questions of whether the RSDLP should exist or not. Congress proposes that the specific propositions in relation to programme and tactics are sufficiently well developed in the émigré publication, *Rabochee Delo*, and believes that further discussion of the Party programme by Congress will not be necessary. Together with this, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the Congress considers it necessary to codify the opinions expressed in our literature, and that a specially elected commission should produce a draft minimum programme which, following its discussion by the local organisations, should be presented to the next Congress for examination.

2) In so far as: i) experience only confirms the truth of the opinions of the previous Congress; ii) these opinions, with a few exceptions, are shared by almost all the Russian Social Democracy; iii) the spiritual link established two years ago still exists today between separate groups of the fighting proletariat; iv) revolutionary practice places a multitude of ongoing questions of organisation before us – the Congress considers it necessary and possible to declare itself the Second Congress of members of the RSDLP and correspondingly devotes itself to the discussion of immediate tactical questions.



3) Fully sharing the general outlook of the previous Congress as to the tasks of the Workers' Party in Russia, the present Congress is nonetheless unable to recognise as appropriate the type of organisation adopted by the newly-formed Party. Regardless of how important, generally speaking, the principle of centralisation is for a revolutionary organisation – the scheme of combining a central group dedicated to general work with separate local committees – there is no possibility of implementing these principles in their purest form in Russia, owing to the size of its territory, the differences of economic, cultural and even legal conditions<sup>15</sup> of different localities, the currently pressurised conspiratorial situation, the constant lack of experienced practical organisers and the ceaseless appearance and disappearance of different groups. There are many revolutionary groups who have succeeded in developing [...] activity, but at the same time a CC<sup>16</sup> cannot maintain the closest relations with all these towns in a way that is undoubtedly necessary for the successful activity of both the CC itself and that of the towns in question. There cannot be successful activity centralised in the hands of one CC if in almost every town agitation takes place under different conditions. The Urals and St. Petersburg, Moscow and Odessa, Ekaterinoslav and the Bund – all these industrial regions are so different from one another that they cannot under any circumstances hand over the business of influencing the masses by literary means to a handful of people separated from these masses. And if we add here that the arrest of any one member of the CC could destroy the whole great enterprise and that local organisations can afford to share with that CC only a very limited number of people, then the impracticability of such a plan becomes obvious.

Therefore, noting:

- 1) that our movement is not only concentrated in the big industrial cities, but is scattered around a significant number of small towns

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15 The authors are presumably referring to the Grand Duchy of Finland, which was technically a constitutional monarchy with the Russian tsar at its head (as 'grand Duke') between 1809–1906. A Finnish Diet representing the different social estates met regularly between 1863–1917, though after 1899 there were increasing attempts by Nicholas II to remove powers from it. In 1906, the diet was replaced by a parliament based on universal suffrage, but this too came into repeated conflict with the Russian authorities. In principle, a similar arrangement existed in Poland, but there 'constitutional rule' was essentially a legal fiction.

16 Central Committee.

- 2) that the CC can only have contact with a limited selection of the big cities and is not in a position to satisfy even the most urgent needs of the small towns
- 3) that our largest industrial regions should have their own periodical and non-periodical literature specially adapted to local needs and that at the same time neither the CC, because of its involvement in the broadest sphere of activity nor the local committees in isolation, owing to lack of means, can take on this responsibility
- 4) that the CC, which can only be made up of a limited number of people, cannot satisfy the needs of all towns for general literature and technical help any more than their need for personnel
- 5) that it is essential to put an end to the superfluous and disorderly relations that have been established between individual towns
- 6) that it is necessary to attract the largest number of people possible to conspiratorial-organisational work
- 7) that life itself has mapped out the solution to the question outlined below

Congress proposes:

- a) To create a series of regional organisations, made up of towns close to one another and with conspiratorial relations obtaining between these towns, whilst the CC establishes relations exclusively with the regional organisations so that the functions of the CC are narrowed.
- b) The organisation of these regional unions should be as follows: the biggest town with the most firm and solid movement in a given region takes upon itself the responsibility of organising the closest possible relations with the other towns in its region. For these towns it: i) publishes a regional newspaper; ii) supplies literature; iii) prints (where necessary) leaflets and public statements; iv) distributes personnel, to the extent that this is possible; v) organises the regional union's funds; vi) where necessary, organises regional congresses; vii) attends all-Russian congresses as a representative; viii) carries out various conspiratorial responsibilities.
- c) Any town joining the regional union provides financial support and personnel in accordance with its ability. At the same time it should resort to contacting other *okrug* organisations only in cases of extreme necessity.
- d) The region can divide its functions between two towns instead of granting them to just one town.
- e) Every year, the boundaries of the region are redefined at general congresses.

- 4a) Recognising the serious need of our movement for a Party press organ, whilst at the same time recognising that *Rabochee Delo*, which is published abroad, cannot replace this type of newspaper, Congress considers it necessary to restart the publication of *Rabochaia Gazeta*.
- b) In so far as *Rabochaia Gazeta* is the official newspaper of the Party, having set itself the goal of responding to circumstances in the interests of a definite class – the proletariat – and in so far as *Rabochaia Gazeta*, in view of the existence of regional (mass) publications can be adapted to the understanding of only the most developed layers of the working class, its programme should be as broad and full as possible and should encompass not only the description of the different manifestations of working-class struggle but also the analysis and evaluation of the most important aspects of social and state politics, both in Russia and abroad. The activity of the State Council<sup>17</sup> and the Committee of Ministers,<sup>18</sup> of the urban and rural organs of self-government, the factory and mine inspectorates<sup>19</sup> should be covered in the pages of *Rabochaia Gazeta*. Apart from this, in the paper there should be a section for the working-out of programmatic, tactical and organisational questions.
- c) *Rabochaia Gazeta* should appear not less frequently than once a month. Accordingly, part of the contents of *Rabochee Delo* – specifically the part dedicated to the day-to-day activity of Russian organisations of struggle – should become the responsibility of *Rabochaia Gazeta*. Given that we have hardly any learned social literature, and since establishing any under the current conspiratorial technical conditions inside Russia would be impossible, the Congress proposes to the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad that they give *Rabochee Delo* the character of a popular-scientific anthology, which at the same time involves a critical survey of activity in Russia.
- d) The Editorial Board of *Rabochaia Gazeta* will be elected from members of the Congress. It will be made up of three members: one concerned with technical matters, two with the direct supervision of editorial work.

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17 This was an advisory body to the tsar of some sixty members, which developed legislation presented to it by the tsar or his ministers. It had no independent decision-making or formal powers.

18 Another advisory body, a ministerial cabinet without decision-making powers which was also known as the Council of Ministers when the tsar took part in proceedings, thus converting it into a decision-making body.

19 Apparently these dated from 1882, becoming permanent in 1886. For a discussion and summary of tsarist labour legislation, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 267–315 and pp. 81–8.

- e) The Editorial Board has the right to be represented on the CC and the right to co-opt new members.
- f) The financial means required for the support of a printing press are given by the regional organisations (proportionally) by mutual agreement.
- g) Correspondence and articles should be supplied by all organisations without exception, whether directly, or through the main regional towns.
- h) The Editorial Board is responsible for attracting the largest possible circle of literary forces. There are a large number of scientifically educated people only recently separated from practical activity scattered about in exile<sup>20</sup> who could prove to be of real help in literary work. Once these forces are drawn together, the Editorial Board should work towards the creation of a series of agitational brochures dedicated to the most crucial questions of contemporary Russian socio-economic and political life. For example: piece-rate pay, taxes, workers' insurance, female and child labour, unemployment and so forth.

*Note:* if the Editorial Board does not manage to bring to press all the material sent to it, it must turn to the regional organisations for help.

- 5) Responsibility for the transportation of literature should lie directly with the regional organisations, who will arrange all matters with the RSDLP.
- 6) May Day is to be celebrated with public announcements and pamphlets published in the name of the Party and in the name of the local committees in those towns where this is possible owing to the development of the masses. The creation, editing and publication of Party pamphlets is the responsibility of the Editorial Board of *Rabochaia Gazeta*. The question of whether demonstrations should be organised is to be decided by the appropriate local committee.
- 7) Representation at International Congresses, and dealings with other parties, whether Russian or foreign, is granted to the Editorial Board of *Rabochaia Gazeta*, which for conspiratorial reasons can transfer this mandate to the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. As for the forthcoming International Congress, the Congress grants a mandate to Plekhanov and a representative of the editorial board of *Rabochee Delo*, who is to be

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20 In Siberia, not abroad: the word used here is *ssyl'ka*, which refers to a judicial punishment. The tsarist authorities did not generally exile people from the territory of the Russian Empire as a punishment.

elected by the latter in the name of the RSDLP.<sup>21</sup> Congress instructs these delegates to compose a report on the position of the workers' movement in Russia and to inform the International Congress of the renewal of the activity of the CC of the RSDLP and the re-establishment of the Party's press organ. The report of the Congress of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad is to be printed.

- 8) Recognising that it is the responsibility of the Party to unite the workers' movement in Russia, and to personify its united goals and aspirations, Congress entrusts to the CC the publication and distribution among the regional organisations of leaflets and public declarations concerning the most significant facts of Russian public life.
- 9) Relations to other Socialist parties adopting the perspective of class struggle.
- 10) The decisions of the Congress will remain secret up until the publication of the third issue of *Rabochaia Gazeta*.

#### APPENDIX

### 'From an Unpublished Memoir'

*Iu. O. Martov*

I could not at first make out the situation with which Ulianov and Potresov familiarised me. It turned out to be confusing enough, whilst demanding rapid but at the same time careful decisions.

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21 Plekhanov and Krichevskii duly attended the Fifth Congress of the Second International in September 1900. However, they were only part of a much larger Russian delegation. In the event the Union Abroad sent seven delegates, most of whom carried mandates from local organisations inside Russia, whilst the 'Emancipation of Labour' – 'Social-Democrat' faction sent four. These also claimed to represent groups inside Russia. The Bund sent 11 delegates on a similar basis and the Foreign Committee of the Union of Russian Socialist Revolutionaries (the 'Essars') sent three. One further delegate represented the 'Group of Old Narodovoltsi', who published Plekhanov's *Vademecum*, the fourth document in the present collection.

We returned to Russia with the impression that an 'economic tendency' had become dominant within the ranks of the Social Democracy, a change which had caused a split in the leading émigré Party organisation, the 'Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad', which had been recognised at the First Congress of the Party as its official representative, but which had disintegrated the following year. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group, along with a few supporters (Koltsov,<sup>22</sup> Blumenfeld, Goldenberg-Meshkovskii,<sup>23</sup> Leiteisen-Lindov,<sup>24</sup> Orthodox-Axelrod<sup>25</sup> and others), formed the organisation 'Social Democrat',<sup>26</sup> whilst the supporters of 'Economism' and revisionism, Krichevskii, Ivanshin,<sup>27</sup> Teplov<sup>28</sup> and Makhnovets,<sup>29</sup> led the Union's majority faction. This split had little effect on the organisations in Russia, as the majority of them were at this time either gravitating towards the 'Economism' being professed by the press

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22 See Chapter 4, footnote 82 for bibliographic details.

23 Probably Iosif Petrovich Goldenberg (1873–1922), later a leading Bolshevik who, taking a defencist position in World War I, was on the right of the Bolshevik Party during 1917.

24 Gavriil Davidovich Leiteisen (1874–1919), also known as 'Lindov', had been active as a Social Democrat in Ekaterinoslav. He later supported the 'Emancipation of Labour' group whilst in the emigration. He sided with the Bolsheviks after the Second Congress of the RSDLP and became an active participant in Bolshevik journalism. He was killed in the Civil War whilst fighting for the Red Army.

25 Liubov Isaakovna Axelrod (1868–1946) collaborated with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad, *Iskra* and *Zaria*. She sided with the Mensheviks after the Second Congress of the RSDLP and by 1917 was one of Plekhanov's few remaining allies in his 'Unity' organisation. In the early-Soviet period she was an academic at the Institute of Red Professors who specialised in Marxist philosophy and the theory of art, but she fell out of favour in the Stalin period owing to her past. She was not related to Pavel Axelrod and used the pen name 'Orthodox'.

26 The oddly-named Revolutionary Organisation 'Social Democrat' was created following the Second Congress of the Union Abroad on 14–15 April 1900 N.S., at which the Plekhanovites ended their collaboration with the Union. This meeting appears to have taken place in the middle of the negotiations described by Martov in this document, and presumably after the meeting between Koppelson and the group around Lenin.

27 Vladimir Petrovich Ivanshin (1869–1904) was an editor of *Rabochee Delo* and a member of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. He had previously been active in the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle as a sympathiser of *Rabochaia Mysl'*.

28 Pavel Fedorovich Teplov (1867–1908) (also Sibirak or Markov) was an editor of *Rabochee Delo*. He was also a leading member of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad who was involved in the factional struggle with the Plekhanovites between autumn 1898 and April 1900.

29 This individual is better known as Vladimir Petrovich Akimov (1872–1921), a leading supporter of *Rabochee Delo*. A selection of his writings from the *Iskra* period of the RSDLP's history has been translated into English: see Frankel (ed.) 1969. After 1905, Akimov was mainly involved in the co-operative movement.

organ of the Petersburg 'Union of Struggle', *Rabochaia Mysl'*, which denied that the struggle for the overthrow of tsarism was the immediate task of the working class, or making their peace with this tendency, not considering that it was necessary to pose the question of this struggle in a practical sense, given the weakness of the Party.<sup>30</sup> The mood of this 'marsh' corresponded entirely with the tendency of the émigré Union, which in literature designed for the broad masses devoted the greater part of its attention to questions of professional-economic struggle, whilst at the same time exposing the role of the government in the struggle between capital and labour, and recognising the struggle against the autocracy as a task of the Social Democracy 'in principle' in the programmatic and tactical articles of its mouthpiece, *Rabochee Delo*, whilst postponing the onset of this struggle until a point at which the mass movement had been greatly strengthened. Nevertheless the split, having taken place abroad, alarmed some Social Democrats operating inside Russia. Although the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, in contrast to the recently-emigrated lead-

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30 The St. Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was an organisation formed at the end of 1894 and which combined the activities of a number of propaganda circles, in which workers were taught Marxist theory and also elements of a general education forbidden in legal schools, with intervention in strikes using leaflets, proclamations and the like. During 1895, a delegation was sent abroad to make contact with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the intention being that the latter should provide theoretical literature to the Russian Social-Democratic underground. The result was the journal *Rabotnik*. Simultaneously Lenin, who was a key member of the Union of Struggle, tried to set up an underground newspaper inside Russia which was called *Rabochee Delo*, but the main people involved (including Lenin, Martov, Potresov and Krupskaya) were soon arrested. 'Unions of Struggle' subsequently emerged in other towns and four of these came together in 1898 to help form the RSDLP, renaming their leading bodies 'committees of the RSDLP' in the process. With the arrest of the St. Petersburg group around the first *Rabochee Delo* (which had nothing to do with the later journal of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, 1899–1902), the right wing gained an ascendancy in the St. Petersburg Social Democracy, its main publication being *Rabochaia Mysl'* (1897–1902). The influence of revisionist and 'Economist' figures such as Ekaterina Dmitrievna Kuskova (1860–1958) and certain co-thinkers over this newspaper led to it being perceived as anti-RSDLP by *Iskra* supporters and they campaigned for its exclusion from the Party. Subsequently, *Rabochaia Mysl'* attached itself to the 'St. Petersburg Workers' Organisation', a stronghold of pro-*Rabochee Delo* views within the Union of Struggle, which was permanently at odds with the *Iskra*-ites, with whom it fought for control of the 'committee' in the capital. The Workers' Organisation was eventually granted representation to the Second Congress of the RSDLP on equal terms with the St. Petersburg committee, and its firmly pro-'Economist' representative was Lydia Makhnovetz – Akimov's sister.



ers of the 'Union', possessed only weak personal links with members active in Russian organisations, all its polemical output provoked by the split was circulated in Russia and aroused alarm among several old Marxists regarding the bias of Party development towards the direction of removing revolutionary content from its programme and from its practice. Especially significant in relation to this, as I afterwards became convinced, was the short pamphlet by Axelrod, *An Open Letter to the Editors of Rabochee Delo*, in which the author, not limiting himself to the exposure of theoretical sympathies with revisionism and the neglect of broad political questions among individual 'Unionists' in the manner of Plekhanov in the *Vademecum*, graphically showed how the practice dominant in Russia of self-limiting Social Democracy to everyday questions of factory struggle so as to create a thorough class basis for the Party in the manner preferred by the 'Economists', in reality inevitably prepared a situation in which the working masses, when they recognised their general civic and political interests, would be inclined to conduct the struggle for them outside the ranks of their class organisations and under the banner of some bourgeois-democratic party or other. As in his earlier tactical pamphlets, Axelrod thus firmly placed before the Social Democracy not only the task of drawing the working class directly to the political struggle against the existing state structure, but also the task of doing it in the capacity of an independent social force, as the vanguard of the whole democracy, attracting all other social forces to the line of struggle against tsarism.

It was with this programme that we returned to Russia.<sup>31</sup> It had been formulated in the previously-mentioned *Protest* against the anti-revolutionary *Credo*, worked out by Lenin, around which Marxists exiled in various places united in 1899. But an organisational line was also formulated in this very same protest, which was to lead to the completion of new tasks by the Party. It was a line directed towards the restoration of the Party as an organisational whole. It was a fact that the Party centre disappeared following the raids of 1898 and we explained its failure to be re-established not so much as the result of conspirative-technical difficulties so much as the result of the triumph of the 'Economist' mood which adopted that same method of organic evolution towards the process of organisational unity as it did towards the process of transition on the part of the working masses from more elementary slogans to more complex ones (the so-called 'theory of stages'). From the point of view of the 'Economists', the then-current level of the movement corresponded to weak federative links between local organisations, and even at that time they were inclined to regard attempts to speed up the creation of a central

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31 That is, from Siberia, having finished their sentences.

leadership apparatus as 'People's Will-ism' and 'Jacobinism', which would lead to a separation of the leadership from the masses.

The restoration of the Central Committee of the Party and its central press organ, *Rabochaia Gazeta* – this, therefore, was how we formulated our demands to the Party in 1899.<sup>32</sup>

When Lenin and Potresov visited Moscow and St Petersburg, they discovered that this organisational programme had also been taken up by those we considered to be our main opponents – the *Rabochee Delo* supporters from the Union Abroad.

It turned out that two representatives of this Union – Teplov and Koppelson ('Timofei', 'Grishin'), my old comrade from Vilno, were undertaking a tour through Russia at this time in order to win the local committees to the idea of organising a second Party Congress. Accordingly, it became clear that the 'emissaries' of the Union, having got wind of our plans, were studying them and were proposing the re-establishment of *Rabochaia Gazeta* in the capacity of an official Party press organ at a forthcoming Congress, whilst granting its editorship to our trio. Lalayants,<sup>33</sup> a leader of the Ekaterinoslav Committee and editor of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, first began to speak about this with Ulianov in Moscow, having arrived there to sound out the attitude of the northerners to the émigré-Congress project. After that, and prior to my arrival in Pskov, the same Timofei had paid a visit there and touched on the very same theme in a conversation with Lenin and Potresov.

At first glance, the plan of the Union could only seem to us to be the most Machiavellian of chess moves. In order to overthrow Plekhanov and Axelrod, they would exploit the prejudices of the Russian practical-'Economists' against

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32 *Rabochaia Gazeta* was formed by members of the Kiev Union of Struggle and its editors were also in contact with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. It played the leading role in organising the First Congress of the RSDLP in 1898, prior to which two issues of the newspaper had appeared. There were no further issues as it was never re-established following the raid on this meeting. Lenin submitted articles to it from Siberian exile (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 205–26) and support for the newspaper is expressed in the *Protest* against the *Credo*.

33 Isaak Khristoforovich Lalayants (1870–1933) was an Armenian Social Democrat. Active in the Social-Democratic movement from the age of 18, he was repeatedly arrested, imprisoned and exiled in his capacity as an underground operative. He was exiled to Samara in 1893 where, with Lenin and others, he was involved in the creation of a Marxist circle. In 1896 he was involved in the creation of the Ekaterinoslav 'Union of Struggle' and was later (1902–3) involved in the production of *Iskra* whilst in the emigration. From 1922–9 he worked in the political-education section of the Commissariat for Enlightenment, until he retired in 1929.

a too 'political' bias in their activity. But, having come to power, they must have soon felt that the days of pure 'Economism' were numbered. The favourable industrial conjuncture of the mid-1890s had been replaced by a crisis, and the relatively easily obtained immediate successes of the localised strike movement during the years 1895–7 had already become an anachronism by 1899. Strikes all the more often became stormy in character and the basis for the introduction of political agitation became more favourable. In the industrial south, towards which the strike wave belatedly rolled from the north, the stormy character of the movement, conditioned by the unfavourable economic conjuncture, led at once to such an open clash with the government (the firing on crowds and the trials in Mariupol and other places)<sup>34</sup> that the passing over to 'politics' in every sense was completed relatively easily by the working masses. And at this very same time an awakening took place in society which had been lacking at the time when our strike movement was formed. An entirely different social backcloth was created for the workers' movement from that with which short-sighted empiricists were reckoning when working-out their 'theory of stages' – a gradual organic passage of the proletarian movement from sectional tasks to general ones. In 1899 the students, having borrowed the strike weapon from the workers, engaged in disorders previously unheard of in terms of their scale and enthusiasm, and the social resonance with which the actions of the students met permitted the hope that the political isolation of the workers in the arena of active struggle would soon come to an end.<sup>35</sup>

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34 In May 1899, machinists went on strike at the Nikopol-Mariupol steel works, located near the town of Mariupol in the Donets Basin, demanding pay increases and access to clean drinking water. Several workers were arrested and marched into Mariupol by the police. However, the convoy passed the nearby Russian Providence metal works and workers from both factories successfully fought to liberate the arrested strikers. Later, back at the Nikopol-Mariupol works, soldiers fired into a meeting of workers and the strike was suppressed. These events were mentioned in a report by the Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers to the Second Congress of the RSDLP (Angarskii (ed.) 1930).

35 This refers to events at St. Petersburg University, starting in February, in which the Rector published an announcement requesting a less disorderly celebration of the university's anniversary by students than had previously been the case. Defiance of this request led to a street procession that was attacked by cavalry. Protest meetings against the violence were held, an organising committee was formed and a student-strike movement emerged which involved around thirty higher-education institutions. A government commission was created which heard from both representatives of the students and the police and which reversed the expulsions of some students involved, but the universities were subject to repressive measures once the strike had abated. In June 1899, the government

All this did not bypass the followers of *Rabochee Delo*. The majority of them were 'practicals' – only Krichevskii was a typical man of letters, though quite without any theoretical substance, even though he had a great interest in theory. The practicals steered a course to the left, probably imperceptibly to themselves and without any effort on their part. During the tour of the committees, their representatives argued that the whole split with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group was in essence deprived of all principled basis and that the overthrow they had carried out was called for only as a result of the dictatorial tendencies of Plekhanov and Axelrod and the latter's impatience towards those who disagreed with them, this overthrow having the sole aim of defending the more active work of the Union, that of furnishing the work being carried out in Russia with pamphlets for mass agitation. They argued that all attempts of the 'old ones' to construct profound programmatic and tactical disagreements between them lacked the least basis: the Union did not in the least recognise revisionism, the suppression of political tasks or the organisational dislocation of the Party. And in an attempt to clearly prove all this, an invitation of the Union to us known 'orthodox' and 'Plekhanovists' 'to come and take possession of' the central press organ of the Party was introduced.

As I have already said, at first glance the suggestion seemed Machiavellian: it was as if they wanted us to separate from the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, solidarity with whom we proudly declared, thus frustrating our union with the latter by leading us into a 'legal' framework of Party-constitutional relations. But whilst telling me about the conversation with Koppleson, neither Lenin nor Potresov were inclined to explain the activity of the Union as the product of military cunning alone. On the contrary, they saw in it a recognition of the strength of the position which we had acquired in the Party and a readiness to come to terms with us. And given that the agent of the Union understood that the Party was unthinkable without the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, it was obvious that they did not want to set us against it, but to build a bridge to it using our hands.

It was necessary to reckon with the invitation of the Union all the more seriously owing to the fact that they had enlisted the support of two of the most powerful organisations in Russia. On the one hand, the Bund stood behind them, the émigré representatives of which were all linked to the

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published 'Temporary Regulations' regarding the universities, which banned meetings and previously legal mutual-aid organisations, whilst at the same time allowing for students who violated the regulations to be drafted into the army.

Union.<sup>36</sup> On the other, they were connected with the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group which, thanks to the fighting revolutionary tone and talent of the newspaper and thanks to the hellish organisational energy of its main workforce – Abram Ginzburg ('Andrei' – later the well-known Kiev writer Naumov, the Marxist)<sup>37</sup> – became the actual regional centre of the south east. In my Turukhansk<sup>38</sup> plans I personally, on the basis of a letter from my brother Sergei,<sup>39</sup> had 'set my sights' on precisely this region as our main organisational buttress, considering that a new understanding of the tasks of the Social Democracy would be more easily instilled there than in the centres of the movement – in Piter, Moscow and Kiev. Therefore I even chose Poltava for my place of residence.

Because it was supported by the Bund and the southerners, the invitation of the Union was sufficiently tempting. It at once gave us a legal Party position with which to influence the consciousness of active workers and, moreover, delivered us from all organisational upheavals. We could only expect serious opposition from the group of pure 'Economists' of the Petersburg doctrine, who clearly refined the idea of trade unionism under the conditions of Russian tsarism to absurdity with their *Rabochaia Mysl'* and who were in no way capable of formulating and substantiating their programme thanks to the theoretical confusion of their adepts. The backward mass of 'practicals' would follow us.

The other side of the medal was the indefinite nature of the political mood of these 'practicals', not to mention their leaders in the Union Abroad. The pattern inherited from the middle of the decade thus still ruled over their ideas; they had got into such a habit of 'starting at the beginning' in relation

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36 This is an indirect allusion to Koppelson who, along with one other Bundist, John Mill (1870–1952) formed the Foreign Committee of the Bund in 1898. The reference to a 'link' between Koppelson and the Union Abroad is in fact a massive understatement – Koppelson was its corresponding secretary.

37 Abram Moiseevich Ginzburg (1870–1937) was subsequently a Menshevik who found work after the revolution in senior Soviet state-planning bodies, eventually becoming a professor of economics. He was gaoled in 1931 at the 'Menshevik Trials' directed against 14 senior economists accused of sabotage during the first Five-Year Plan. It seems that he was later executed, though for decades nothing was known about his fate. He was rehabilitated in 1991.

38 A settlement in the Krasnoyarsk region, where Martov had presumably stayed during his term of exile.

39 Sergei Osipovich Tsederbaum (1879–1939) was an active *Iskra*-ite and Menshevik like his better known brother Iulius, who is generally known by the pseudonym Martov. He worked as an agent at the Western border for *Iskra*. Though not politically active following the Bolshevik Revolution, he was executed as a supposed counter-revolutionary.

to broader political questions – starting from strikes in which the ‘bourgeoisie’ immediately opposed the ‘proletariat’ – that we, with our plan of raising the banner of a popular struggle, were obliged to ask ourselves: would our official positions and the supervision of a future Central Committee not tie us hand and foot? Would the result not be a hurriedly restored Party unity bearing a rotten, compromising character?

Having discussed all sides of the question, we decided to accept the invitation to the Congress, whose convocation within two months had been proposed, whilst immediately entering into correspondence with the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group and proposing that it send us its mandate for this Congress. At the Congress, we were to present a detailed ‘profession of faith’, in which the revolutionary tasks of the Party would be clearly enunciated, as we understood them, and our collective candidature for the Editorial Board of the Party’s press organ was to be accepted only on the basis of the approval of this programme by the Congress. If, in view of the short space of time remaining prior to the Congress, it proved impossible to prepare the leading circles of local workers for the acceptance of our platform by means of a personal tour, the Congress would have demonstrated that it was not yet in a position to work out a strict programme of action, and we would then argue that the Congress should not take any decisions connected to matters of principle, that the official press organ of the Party should not be re-established, and that the Congress should allow us to open up a debate in our own paper concerning the basic tasks of the Party on our own initiative. We considered that the Congress should declare itself to be nothing more than an advisory conference in such a case.

This second outcome seemed more advantageous to us in all respects. All the signs were that the ideology of ‘Economism’ had outlived its time, both in worker- and intelligentsia-circles, but that there remained a great deal of confusion over programmatic and tactical questions in the heads of the ‘practicals’, who had been raised on *Rabochaia Mysl’* and the writings of the legal ‘critics of Marx’.

[....]

## Boris Krichevskii, 'Economics and Politics in the Russian Workers' Movement', *Rabochee Delo* No. 7

*By the summer of 1900 it was becoming clear that most of the ambitions conceived by Rabochee Delo and its supporters during the struggle with the Plekhanovites of the previous year would not be realised. Their plans for a Second RSDLP Congress had collapsed, and Lenin's circle was in the process of making a pact with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and its émigré followers to produce and distribute Iskra, an 'unofficial central Party newspaper' for the RSDLP, along with a theoretical journal, Zaria. This alliance was being constructed at the price of Plekhanov insisting that clear criticism of Rabochee Delo be included in the programmatic declaration of the new newspaper, along with the insinuation that it and similar publications bore responsibility for a period of 'ideological wavering' in the Russian Social Democracy. Indeed, in an explosive first meeting between Lenin and Plekhanov in August, the latter severely criticised the former's openness towards the anti-'Emancipation of Labour' group tendencies in the RSDLP, thus directly challenging Rabochee Delo's ambition of drawing Lenin over to their side.<sup>1</sup> Though Lenin was at this stage evidently bewildered by this hostility to Rabochee Delo, he nonetheless persisted with Plekhanov given the latter's basic sympathy for revolutionary-Marxist ideas and his capacity and authority as a writer. From the point of view of Rabochee Delo, this must surely have represented a setback given the journal's repeated attempts to declare solidarity with Lenin during their campaign against Plekhanov. Given the recent split in the Union Abroad, Lenin's continued loyalty to the Plekhanovites could only have represented a clear and final rejection of Rabochee Delo's overtures.*

*One additional problem was that Rabochee Delo's plan to produce a brochure dedicated to programmatic debate and the revisionist controversy was not realised, possibly owing to the lack of a positive response from the local committees in Russia.<sup>2</sup> This situation obliged them to develop their political position using their own intellectual forces, and Krichevskii's article in the seventh issue of the journal, 'Economic and Political Struggle in the Russian Workers' Movement', seems to represent an attempt to do just this. The article expanded upon some*

1 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 320–56 for an account of this exchange and two relevant documents.

2 See Chapter 3 of the collection.



*of the tactical remarks in Rabochee Delo's programme, Krichevskii returning to the theme of political consciousness and the way it was acquired by workers as a result of direct participation in strike struggles over 'economic' issues, such as the length of the working day, fines for inaccurate work, wages, holidays and so forth. As in the programme, he argued that, because of the illegality of such actions, workers would meet with police and judicial persecution and would as a result of this gradually acquire the notion that the entire state apparatus served the interests of the factory owners. With the aid of sympathetic Social-Democratic agitators, he claimed that the workers would draw ever more radical conclusions from their experiences and become ever more committed opponents of the autocracy.*

*In all its main ideas, the article seems to borrow heavily from the earlier pamphlet, On Agitation, which was composed by Martov and the Bund activist Arkady Kremer. Thus it clearly differs from Lenin's conception of agitational tactics as expressed in The Tasks of the Social Democrats, in so far as the latter explicitly defends 'socialist' agitation as a current rather than a future practice. That is to say, Lenin advocated linking everyday problems to the Marxist conceptions of society, the economy and history in the propaganda material produced for workers. No such connection is suggested by Krichevskii, who appears to take a much more pessimistic view of the workers' capacity to assimilate complex social and political ideas. In his view, political consciousness is acquired step by step and only as a result of direct experience. Consequently, workers must first be presented with propaganda that focuses exclusively on their immediate economic interests at the level of individual enterprises, and only after a period in which a series of such campaigns conducted at this level are met with police repression will the mass of workers become open to the idea that not only an individual employer, but the entire owning class exploits its workforce, just as the state apparatus as a whole is the enemy of the workers' movement, rather than individual officials, judges, gendarmes and so forth.*

*The questions of how long this 'preparatory' phase of economic agitation should last and what proportion of workers still needed to pass through it is obviously of interest when evaluating the degree to which Rabochee Delo was – in reality if not in principle – an advocate of exclusively economic agitation. By characterising the Russian labour movement as 'young' at the beginning of the article and noting that this labour movement starts in every country as a result of economic issues, Krichevskii appears to be affirming that in practice the Russian Social Democracy should be directing the greater part, if not all, of its energies towards economic campaigns. As such, despite his protestations concerning the fundamentally 'political' character of Social Democracy, the article*

seems to give an indication as to why the label 'Economist' adhered to Rabochee Delo with such a peculiar force.

Another controversial question connected to Krichevskii's argument is the degree to which it invites manipulation by agitators of workers believed to be not well versed in political realities. One would hope that any agitator following his prescriptions would actually warn the workers he was encouraging to strike about the likelihood of a brutal police reaction, arrests and various forms of punishment, rather than simply allowing them to learn from experience. However the article seems unclear on this point, and there is therefore the danger that the agitator would fail to tell his audience what to expect when inciting a particular action. Not only this, Krichevskii seems to assume, possibly somewhat naively, that striking workers with a low level of consciousness would automatically blame the authorities rather than their own leaders for any violence or punishment taking place as a result of a strike. The idea that weaknesses or mistakes on the part of workers' leaders would be blamed is not entertained, and Krichevskii therefore does not reckon with the possibility that the agitator in question might be treated rather severely by his audience, should he fail to be entirely honest in his dealings with them.

Despite these flaws, and despite it representing one of the main theoretical statements of Rabochee Delo, the tactical argument advanced by Krichevskii in Rabochee Delo No. 7 was never dignified with a detailed refutation by either Lenin or Plekhanov. The reasons for this probably have more to do with the argument's similarity to the one advanced by Martov in *On Agitation* and the fact of the latter's presence in the Lenin circle rather than any tacit sympathy with Krichevskii's fundamentally derivative work. In the first issue of *Zaria*, Plekhanov did debate and criticise the earlier pamphlet, pointedly observing that it is better to debate the original 'Economists' rather than their imitators, whilst failing to mention Krichevskii's article.<sup>3</sup> Lenin, meanwhile, quickly dismisses 'Economics and Politics' in *What Is To Be Done?* with a brief negative characterisation, whilst reserving a brief word of praise for *On Agitation*.<sup>4</sup> Though this might seem self-contradictory given the similarity of the two works, Lenin's remarks do not need to be interpreted in this way. Lenin probably felt more charitable to *On Agitation* owing to the fact that it was published prior to the mass strike wave of the 1890s, which in his view exposed some of the limitations of its argument: namely the way it underemphasised the importance of building a revolutionary party to co-ordinate all forms of anti-autocratic resistance, not just labour disputes.

3 Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 74–91.

4 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 376 and p. 390.

*Krichevskii was probably regarded more negatively because he did not appear to have learned the lessons of this experience in the desired manner, and thus stood charged with promoting outdated ideas.*

## Economic and Political Struggle in the Russian Workers' Movement

### 1

The problem of the relationship between economic and political struggle has been occupying the minds of western-European Social Democrats. In recent years it has provoked especially lively debates in the literature of the West. There, debates have taken place over the relative importance of one or the other form of struggle, on the significance of workers' unions, consumers' and producers' co-operatives both for the immediate interests of the proletariat and for its final liberation – for the introduction of a socialist system – and, finally, on the relations between the economic organisations of the proletariat and its political organisation, the Social-Democratic Party and also its relations with all the other political parties.

Perhaps in Russia we do not have room for this argument in its entirety. All the conditions of Russian life are so backward in relation to Western Europe. Our workers' movement is too young for *all* the aforementioned questions to have a *practical* significance. In Russia, the question of the relationship between economic and political struggle bears, as it were, a more modest character, though for all that, perhaps a much more important one for our young movement.

Russian workers still have to fight for all those political rights which Western workers have already been enjoying for a long time. And the whole question now consists in deciding *by what means they will most easily obtain the rights they need*. We begin directly with the workers' struggle for political rights, in so far as it represents a *common basis* for all Russian Social Democrats. Those who do not recognise the necessity of the political struggle of the working class are not Social Democrats. But on this common basis, disagreements connected to the question of which road will lead most successfully to the goal are entirely

possible, particularly disagreements connected to the role of economic struggle in the liberation movement of the Russian proletariat.

What is more, for every Social Democrat it is clear that only a *mass* movement of workers guarantees success and that, consequently, the leading elements of our movement – the committees and groups – should make every effort to obtain influence over the masses, to attract them to the movement and to keep them there. Now the question posed earlier of the most expedient means leads to another closely linked question: *by what means can one most successfully strengthen the mass character of the movement, developing at the same time the class, and consequently the political consciousness of the masses?* The latter part of this statement speaks for itself, for whoever loses from sight the essential task of the Social Democracy – the development of the class-consciousness of the proletariat – and the special task of the Russian Social Democracy at the present time – the hastening of the transition from the spontaneous mass movement to a conscious, class one – is not a Social Democrat.

On this common ground, however, arguments as to the greater or lesser importance of the economic struggle, the feasibility of having a political effect on the masses during strikes and on other occasions, the timeliness of the transition to political agitation among a given section of workers and the content of this agitation are once again possible. We are now going to examine these questions.

The Russian workers' movement was not alone in beginning with economic struggle, in which workers fought first of all with separate factory owners for their immediate economic interests. Such was the initial character of the *independent*<sup>5</sup> workers' movement in all countries. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of Marx and Engels, we read: 'The proletariat passes through several degrees of development... first of all, individual workers fight back, then workers in one factory enter into struggle with the one bourgeois who is directly exploiting them, then the workers in one branch of industry in a given locality...'<sup>6</sup> At a later stage of development:

the clash between separate workers and separate bourgeois ever more takes on the character of a struggle between two classes. The workers start to organize strikes against the bourgeois, they unite with the goal of

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5 In distinction from those cases in which the proletariat, still not conscious of its own special class interests, was drawn into political struggle by the bourgeoisie, under the banner of which it fought [Krichevskii's footnote].

6 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, p. 492.

holding up their rates of pay. They even set up permanent unions in order to establish funds in reserve, laid by for times of active struggle.<sup>7</sup>

With the uninterrupted proliferation of workers' organisation, 'the many local skirmishes, each bearing one and the same character, unite throughout the whole country in a common class struggle. And every class struggle is a political struggle'.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, the authors of the *Manifesto*, in accordance with the actual course of the struggle of the proletariat, see the basis of the political struggle in the economic struggle. The former appears as the consummation of the latter. The unity of workers in the struggle for their economic interests precedes the class, political struggle of the proletariat and invariably leads to it.

Marx expresses the very same opinion as to the first-degree importance of the economic struggle for the development of class consciousness in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in the chapter on 'Strikes and Workers' Coalitions', where he argues against Proudhon and bourgeois economists who considered strikes to be damaging to the interests of workers. Noting in broad outline the course of the economic struggle of workers' unions, he writes:

In this struggle – a real internecine struggle – all the necessary elements of future battles are united and developed. Going as far as this (a struggle for the defence of the workers' union), the coalition takes on a political character. First, economic relations convert the mass of the population into workers. The predominance of capital creates an identical situation and common interests for this mass. In this way, as regards capital, the masses already appear as a class, but they are still not a class for themselves (that is, they are not conscious of themselves as a special class –

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7 Here Krichevskii offers a series of highly selective citations from the *Communist Manifesto* in an attempt to bolster the idea that workers must experience 'economic struggle' before they can engage in political activity. In fact, it is clear that Marx and Engels are arguing no such thing in the passage Krichevskii refers to. Indeed, in the middle of it – Krichevskii avoids citing this passage – the authors appear to identify the problem of what in a later epoch might have been termed 'bourgeois hegemony' over proletarians who are still not class-conscious. As a result of this form of political supremacy, Marx and Engels claim that workers are often used as foot soldiers by the bourgeois in the latter's own political and military struggles with class enemies such as the landed aristocracy, the church hierarchy or absolutism. It is through these experiences rather more than through strikes that workers acquire political consciousness, according to the authors of the *Manifesto*. See Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, pp. 492–3.

8 See previous note.

B.K.). In the struggle outlined by us in only a few of its phases, the united mass is worked up into a class for itself (it recognises that it is a class – B.K.). The interests defended by them become class interests. But the struggle between classes is a political struggle.<sup>9</sup>

These citations of Marx and Engels might prove superfluous. What Social Democrat does not know that, according to the doctrine of Marx and Engels, the economic interests of definite classes play a decisive role in history and that consequently, the particular struggle of the proletariat for its economic interests should be of first-degree significance for its class development and liberation struggle? This is true, every Social Democrat knows it. But it is one thing to know, and another to apply this knowledge to practice. The accusation of 'economic heresy' and of the negation of politics which has been raised recently against Social Democrats active in Russia, which has been raised partially by Social Democrats themselves and seized upon in anger by many, if not all Russian revolutionaries of the other tendencies – these accusations would have been impossible had all Social Democrats been guided in the discussion of tactical questions by the basic principles of Marx and Engels that have just been outlined.

We said that the independent workers' movement in all countries starts with economic struggle. This does not go far enough. Up to now, even in the advanced countries of the West, individual sections of the proletariat or workers in individual locations are moved to class consciousness and are first drawn to the Workers' Party thanks to the impetus of economic struggle. Innumerable examples prove this; we limit ourselves to the most characteristic of them.

The mass strike of the London port workers (dockers) in 1889 laid the basis for 'new trade unionism', a new, political and Social-Democratic tendency among English workers' unions. In France, the town of Carmaux became a fortress of the Socialist Party at the time of the coal miners' strike in 1892 and in general this strike, along with other French strikes at the start of the 1890s, gave a strong push to the development of proletarian class consciousness and the growth of the Socialist Party<sup>10</sup> throughout the country. Last year's strike of French coal miners in Montceau-les-Mines and of the metalworkers in Creusot

9 By contrast, this citation is a fair representation of the original. See Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, p. 211.

10 Contrary to what Krichevskii suggests here, there was no united Socialist Party in France at this stage: numerous independent socialist factions and prominent individuals existed. They were really only united into one party, the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*, in 1905.

served as the basis of the class, political and socialist movement amongst these until then forgotten groups. Less than a year after the strikes, at the municipal Council elections in May 1900, both boldly entered into electoral struggle under the Socialist banner, as a result of which the coal miners of Montceau immediately won power in the town Council, where up to that point the *protégés* of their exploiters had predominated, and the workers of Creusot won more than four thousand votes for their candidates. In Austria, last year's successful struggle of the Brno weavers for the 10-hour working day gave the Social Democrats firm influence on this previously backward group. Finally, we recall the great political significance of the purely spontaneous strike of the Belgian coal miners in 1886, where they had been fighting over pay: since that time the working masses have united in a struggle for general electoral rights and, founded a year earlier, the Belgian Labour Party<sup>11</sup> immediately gained significant strength.

In this way, the general course of the Russian workers' movement entirely corresponds to that of Western Europe. Both there and here the economic struggle appears as the primary form of the mass movement, the start of the class awakening of the proletariat and the irreplaceable source of its political education.

Andrei Zheliabov,<sup>12</sup> one of the heroic fighters for political freedom of the 'People's Will' party,<sup>13</sup> said 20 years ago that a strike in Russia was a political

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11 This would be the *Parti Ouvrier Belge/Belgische Werkleidenpartij*, an ideologically reformist mass party, which existed from 1885–1940.

12 Andrei Ivanovich Zheliabov (1851–81) was a leading member of the Executive Committee of the 'People's Will' party who helped organise the assassination of Alexander II on 1 March 1881. He was executed for his involvement, despite being arrested several days before the killing was carried out, and was thereafter celebrated as a selfless and heroic fighter for democracy by later generations of Russian revolutionaries. He also drafted several of the programmatic documents of 'People's Will' and he placed special emphasis on the role of the urban working class in a revolutionary uprising, thus arguing that revolutionary propaganda and agitation should most of all be orientated towards this section of society.

13 'People's Will' (*Narodnaia Volia*) was an organisation of democratic revolutionaries which was active from 1879. It distributed propaganda among all sections of society, paying particular attention to the urban workers, and promoted a political programme that was not dissimilar to that of the later RSDLP, demanding a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal suffrage to draw up a democratic constitution. However, it is best known for its assassination campaign, which culminated in the killing of Alexander II on 1 March 1881 O.S. 'People's Will' did not adopt a Marxist world-view in terms of its understanding of capitalism and Russian economic development, and socialist ideas entered into its programme only in the form of its support for producers' co-operatives: as such



event. One can say that, in Russia, strikes have had a much greater significance in the political growth of the masses than anywhere else in the world. During strikes, the tsarist government so crudely takes the side of the factory owners, deals in such a brutally violent manner with the strikers that even the most backward worker grows receptive to the ideas of political struggle when passing through the school of a strike. In his own spine he starts to feel an indissoluble link between the struggle for his immediate economic interests, the struggle for political freedom and the necessity of political rights as a consequence of his vital interests, given that the absence of these rights makes a struggle for the improvement of labour conditions extremely difficult.

## 2

In the history of the Russian revolutionary movement we find, in general, three different types of opinion on the problem now occupying us.

The Populists of the 1870s, having denied the political struggle as something unworthy of socialists, at the same time scorned the economic struggle of the *proletariat* for its economic interests (as, it must be said, activity in general among it). This struggle could not interest them, not only because industry and the working class were still in an embryonic state at that time and strikes were a rare occurrence, but also because they placed all their social-revolutionary hopes in the peasants. As well as this, in order to link the economic struggle of workers with the struggle for freedom, they linked the peasant *bunt*<sup>14</sup> – the economic struggle of the peasants for their immediate interests against the landowners, against land shortage and fiscal oppression – with the struggle for socialist revolution, for the immediate realisation of a socialist system which, as they believed, it was possible to 'leap to' directly from the peasant

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it did not envisage the common ownership and planned allocation of society's economic resources, a classless society or the eventual 'withering away' of the state apparatus. However, Marx and Engels were sympathetic to the organisation and corresponded with it, believing that the group's practical efforts to destabilise the autocracy would provoke a general revolt against it, whilst supporting their vision of a democratic Russia as one useful for the development of the workers' movement both in Russia and internationally. These hopes of a broader uprising were not realised in the aftermath of Alexander's death and instead 'People's Will' was smashed by the police, a fact which prompted the Russian Marxists, the followers of Plekhanov, to gradually end their support for assassination campaigns on the grounds of their tactical inexpediency.

14 A peasant mutiny, uprising or riot.

commune, passing by the capitalist period of struggle and the struggle for political freedom.

'People's Will', distinguishing themselves from the ordinary Populists, who remained true to the basic theoretical opinions of their predecessors, rejected activity among the peasants in practice and tried, side-by-side with a heroic political struggle against the autocracy, to operate among the urban workers – after the experience of the Populists themselves showed that the urban workers were incomparably more receptive to socialist propaganda than the peasants. But even 'People's Will' did not link the economic struggle of the working class to political struggle. The workers were only one of the various elements on which the 'People's Will' organisation tried to lean. The 'People's Will' organisation was perhaps still further from the class point of view than the Populists. The latter did not recognise that 'every class struggle is a political struggle' but always expected a socialist revolution from a general peasant insurrection, that is, from the struggle of a section of the population which seemed to them to be economically homogeneous. 'People's Will' expected a political revolution (which, by the way, was to 'coincide' with the socialist revolution in their view) to come from the conspiratorial struggle of their own organisation, which stood outside all classes and above all classes, including the proletariat. It is clear that they could not have been guided by the class interests of the proletariat and that they gave the urban workers special significance not because they as a class were interested in the triumph of political freedom and socialism, but only because, living in the *towns*, the proletariat could offer especially valuable assistance to the 'People's Will' party at the moment of insurrection or at the moment of its seizure of power. If the Populists dreamt about a class struggle that would not be political in their own fashion, then 'People's Will' conducted a political struggle which was not a class struggle, which was not the struggle of a definite class and which consequently did not have any kind of link with the economic struggle of the proletariat. The maxim just cited from Zheliabov, one of the founders of the 'People's Will' organisation, was the brilliant flash of a mind that was observant and sensitive to reality, but which did not exert influence on the activity of 'People's Will'.

Apart from this, the economic struggle of the proletariat for its immediate interests and its link with political struggle was still not appreciated by 'People's Will' because their political goals – the seizure of power, terrorist methods of political struggle, attempts on the life of the tsar – were too far removed from the needs and capabilities of the working *masses*. Between the ambition of conspirators to seize power with the goal of a socialist revolution and the struggle of workers for the raising of the wage-rate or the reduction of the working day lies the same abyss as exists between the participation of a

worker in a strike and his participation in an attempt on the life of the tsar. As with previous revolutionary organisations, individual, highly developed workers joined 'People's Will'. But this was by way of exception – it was a case of workers who had become, so to speak, *intelligenstia*, who had been separated from the masses and who did not exert any influence over them. More than that, even the embryo of an independent Workers' Party at the end of the 1870s (the Northern-Russian and Southern-Russian Workers' Unions), who had tried to place the question of political struggle on a class basis, quickly disappeared without a trace, thanks to the non-class character of the revolutionaries' activity at that time.

Only the class, workers' point of view of the Social Democracy is capable of giving the economic struggle its proper place, fusing it together with political struggle, giving the struggle with the autocracy the firm basis of the class interests of the proletariat. The Social Democracy 'consciously wishes to be and to remain the class movement of the organised working masses' (*Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*). It achieves this by adapting the means of struggle to the needs and abilities of the masses, raising the masses to political consciousness in the process of the struggle itself and preserving a mass character for the movement in its entire forward development.

The key feature of this tactic has already been outlined in the pamphlet *On Agitation*,<sup>15</sup> which was written and distributed in Russia in 1895. In this pamphlet, which marks the passage of Social Democrats from circle-propaganda to agitation among the masses, the task of 'permanent agitation among the factory workers on the basis of their existing petty needs and demands' is advertised – with the goal of working-out, by means of the workers' own struggle, 'class self-awareness' and the creation of a 'basis for political agitation'. The initiators of the agitation period of Russian Social Democracy began at the beginning, with 'petty needs and demands', with economic struggle – precisely because only in this way was it possible to raise the masses to a consciousness of the necessity of political struggle. 'As Social Democrats', they said, 'we set ourselves the task as one of leading the proletariat to consciousness of the necessity of political freedom as a precondition for the possibility of its broad development'. Right at the beginning they established a concrete link between economic and political campaigns: 'It is unthinkable to expect a class movement with a political programme where purely economic campaigning is not conducted on a sufficiently wide scale. It is therefore utopian to suggest that the general mass of Russian workers can conduct a political struggle if

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15 See Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 192–205 for an English translation of this pamphlet.

the necessity of one from the perspective of their own interests alone is not explained with sufficient conviction'.

The mass strikes of the St. Petersburg workers of 1895–7 definitively resolved the question in favour of the tactics indicated in *On Agitation*. From that time, they were adopted in all the centres of the Russian workers' movement and were crowned with success, though these successes were not equally great everywhere.

Social Democrats active in Russia do not separate the workers' movement from the struggle with the autocracy and do not separate the economic from the political struggle precisely because they do not set themselves up in opposition to the working masses. Our organisations are only guides and tutors to the masses, its conscious vanguard (advanced detachment).

From this flows a definite gradualness in the *agitational* activity of our organisations, which corresponds to the level of a given layer of workers. But this gradualness has nothing to do with the mutilation of our programme or with the opportunist hiding of the final goals of the movement. It is only a necessary *pedagogical method* in the interests of the lasting attraction of the masses into the movement and the development of its class consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

What would be said about a teacher who started to teach higher mathematics to students who still did not know the four rules of number? And can a person be found who would accuse the teacher who started from addition and subtraction of disavowing the true principles of science? The demands of common sense in relation to the teaching of any science should also be observed in the teaching of Social-Democratic learning to the masses, that is, in Social-Democratic agitation among the masses. It is necessary to reckon with the relatively low level of the average Russian worker. It is necessary to begin at the beginning.

We use teaching activity only by way of example. Even before we consider the police conditions obtaining in Russia, the activity of a Social-Democratic agitator is by its very character much harder. The instruction of the masses, their enlightenment by means of proclamations, broadsheets and pamphlets is by itself completely inadequate. The masses are really enlightened by *their own experience of struggle*, which in the first instance must of necessity be an economic struggle. Agitation should have the main task of giving the masses this experience, of pushing it into struggle where necessary and then – it is

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16 We are talking about *agitation*, about *influence on the masses in the broad sense*. In the sphere of *propaganda*, in other words of circle-activity among *selected* workers, gradual tactics in the sense indicated have no place as these workers can be prepared in advance for the direct assimilation of the Social-Democratic programme to its full extent. Agitation among the ordinary public is another matter [Krichevskii's footnote].

all the same whether the masses started to fight on their own initiative or under the influence of agitation – making use of the struggle in an explanation to the masses of its entire economic and political significance.

If a teacher is guided solely by the purely logical links between the different parts of the discipline being taught, then an agitator should ensure that the demands he raises before the masses are linked to their experience of struggle. Only under these conditions will these demands become *the demands of the masses themselves* and enter their flesh and blood, serving to constantly raise them to a higher and higher level.

As for the character of economic demands, it is unnecessary to say more: they are in every case dictated by the conditions of labour in each factory and in any case special skill is not needed in order to adapt them to the understanding and needs of a given section of workers. Speaking of the difficulties of agitation, we only have in view the *political* education of the masses. Political demands, however, which are by their very nature general to the whole of Russia, should first of all correspond to the experience drawn by a given section of workers from economic campaigns. Only on the basis of this experience is it possible and right to carry out political agitation and to broaden its content, once again in proportion to further experience.

We can best explain our ideas with reference to the activity of our Ekaterinoslav comrades, which is especially indicative and instructive. We do not hesitate to present it as a model to all those industrial centres of Russia – at least a majority of them – in which the workers stand on the very same level of development as in Ekaterinoslav.

The report of the Ekaterinoslav committee, recently published by the Union of Russian Social Democrats (*The Workers' Movement in Ekaterinoslav*, Geneva, 1900)<sup>17</sup> testifies to the brilliant successes achieved with the tactic of sequentially passing from economic to political agitation in strict correspondence with the experience of struggle. The Ekaterinoslav 'Union of Struggle' (which appeared in December 1897) set itself the goal of 'conducting broad agitation among workers on the basis of day-to-day material needs and requirements which were maturing in the working masses' from the very beginning. For the whole of 1898, in the course of which the Ekaterinoslav workers first of all played a big role in economic campaigns, the activity of the 'Union of Struggle': 'bore a purely *economic* character; the raising of political demands was at that time considered impossible, to the extent that the working masses had fought too little for their economic demands, whilst the police and *gendarmérie* did not demonstrate that active interference in clashes between workers and

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17 S.N. 1900.

owners which could have been used for political agitation. But over the course of time, this situation has started to change. . . .’

Already at the start of 1899, with the transformation of the ‘Union of Struggle’ into the Ekaterinoslav Committee of the RSDLP, ‘changes both in the mood of the working masses and in the character of the activity of the local Social Democracy’ started to appear. ‘These changes were encouraged to a significant degree by the local authorities, the police and the *gendarmérie*’. These were all participants in a brutal intervention at the time of a strike and the trouble they went to in helping the owners strengthened ‘the frustration of workers with the administration and the police, and it only remained for the “Committee” to meet this mood and to start *political* agitation’. This agitation found receptive soil among workers: at the May Day meeting of 1899, ‘Ekaterinoslav workers for the first time declared in their speeches and toasts . . . their readiness to fight for “political freedom”’. After a bloody slaughter carried out by troops against the Mariupol strikers (6 July 1899),<sup>18</sup> the Committee ‘called workers to fight for political freedom’ in a leaflet, three thousand copies of which were distributed. In conclusion, the report notes ‘the foundation and development of class and political consciousness among the Ekaterinoslav working masses . . . the awakening of the Ekaterinoslav workers to independent political activity’.

Fully two years after the start of economic agitation came the possibility of publishing a newspaper for the broad public, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, which bears a decisively political character. In the leading article of the first issue of this newspaper we read: ‘(T)herefore the struggle with this government of fat cats and of exploiters, the aim of overthrowing it and of winning political rights appears to be the vital task of the working class in Russia, a task not less urgent and vital than the question of the reduction of the working day and the raising of pay’. In the article ‘From a Chronicle of the Workers’ Movement’ (reprinted as a supplement to the report of the Ekaterinoslav Committee), the idea is introduced that, for the workers’ movement to be successful, ‘political freedom is necessary, the possession of those rights which act as a powerful weapon in the cause of definitively raising the standard of living of the working class and the cause of its final liberation from oppression and exploitation, which is viewed as its highest ambition’. And in response to an announcement of the strengthening of security in Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, the newspaper expresses certainty that such measures ‘can only speed up the pace of development of the workers’ movement and move it onto the path of the most stubborn and

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18 The translator has not been able to locate further details of this incident. See Chapter 5, footnote 34 for incidents that are probably related to this event.

decisive struggle with the government for the acquisition of political rights and for the bringing down of the autocracy'.

Such is the result of the skilful application of the tactic of politically educating the masses, first and foremost on the basis of their own experience of economic struggle.

### 3

In Ekaterinoslav, the transition to political agitation was, apart from being far-reaching – it went as far as pronouncing the necessity of 'overthrowing the autocracy' – completed very quickly. In other places it was, and is being, completed much more slowly, sometimes too slowly, especially in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk region (see the report of the Ivanovo-Vosnesensk Committee for the last 15 years, published by the Union of Russian Social Democrats, Geneva, 1900). Equally, if we look at other places, political agitation is distinguished by a broader or narrower character. Generally, these differences are undoubtedly to be explained by differing cultural levels in such an extensive country as Russia, and we are far from a situation in which we can measure every section of the Russian proletariat with the same yardstick as regards everyday agitational activity: this would contradict the essence of the tactics we have outlined. But no less sharply would this essence be contradicted by marking time too long in one place, given that its whole idea consists in *the speeding up of political education of the masses*. And in this connection, the activity of our organisation plays an important role. Whatever the differences in local conditions, every part of our organisation should aspire towards an inseparable mental link between economic and political campaigns, a link between the improvement of the situation of workers and the struggle for freedom, which should enter the consciousness of the masses as soon as possible.

If in the West (at the primary stage of development) the proletariat was directly or indirectly attracted to political struggle by the bourgeoisie so long as it was conscious of its special class interests, but did not make a stand as an independent political force, in Russia the tsarist government, which with its rough hand pushes the proletariat directly into independent political struggle in the name of its vital interests, is concerned about this very same thing. It only remains for our Party to use this situation in order to *speed up the growth of workers' political consciousness*. The task of the revolutionary Social Democrats consists in the general speeding up of the natural development of events by means of a working-out of consciousness among the proletariat. Adapted to the Russia of the present moment, this task obliges Social Democrats to aim at



the quickest possible passage from economic to political agitation and further, to the quickest possible expansion of the content of political agitation.

The last of these becomes easier in proportion to the further growth of our workers' movement. We know that the movements of different countries are situated amidst reciprocal relations causing each to speed the other up. The successes of the proletariat of every separate country has a beneficial influence on the growth of the movement in all other countries. And nobody will begin to argue against the fact that the Russian workers' movement would be infinitely weaker at the present moment and would stand on an infinitely lower level had it not received a push on the part of the Western-European movement. But stronger still, naturally, are the reciprocal links between movements in different localities and among different sections of the proletariat in one and the same country. The most advanced locations strongly speed up the quantitative and qualitative growth of the movement in the more backward places. In this way the speed of transfer of the proletariat from a lower level to a higher one should increase all the more. If even now it is necessary to begin at the beginning – with purely economic agitation – in those places where the movement has only just been established, this initial period can undoubtedly be reduced to the smallest possible size.

The same should be said of the expansion of the content of political agitation. By this we understand the passage from partial, more concrete, immediate demands (the right to strike, to form unions, to organise meetings, a press and so on) to the general demand of political freedom which encompasses them, a democratic constitution – in a word, the passage to agitation in favour of our political programme to its full extent. Immediate political demands become accessible to the masses after one or, in extreme cases, several strikes, as soon as the government has set loose the police and the *gendarmerie* (more so with troops!) in the defence of the interests of the factory owners, as soon as workers by their own experience have seen all the necessity of immediate political rights for successful and concerted campaigning. Further experience will show workers the responsibility of the central government for all the violence of the local authorities – along with the *class* character of their struggle and the solidarity of interests of all Russian workers. Workers learn to see the consequences of the autocratic system in this violence and in the obedient tools of the autocratic government in the local authorities. And in the same way, just as the anger of workers towards separate factory owners, their exploiters, is established and turns, in proportion to their consciousness, into anger against the whole class of factory owners and, moreover, is transformed into an irreconcilable enmity towards the capitalist system, the initial anger against individual police-masters, governors or colonels of the *gendarmerie* is elevated

to an irreconcilable enmity towards the autocratic government with the tsar at its head, who directs the whole mechanism of the police, the *gendarmerie* and the army against the workers from the centre.

To explain to the working masses in the process of their struggles and on the basis of their fighting experience the indissoluble link between their vital economic interests and the struggle for their basic political rights, to then explain the indissoluble link between these rights and the necessity of political freedom and the overthrow of the autocracy – this is the urgent *common* task of our entire organisation. The fulfilment of this task could prove easy or difficult, depending on the conditions in a given place and the cultural level of a given section of workers, and can take a greater or lesser amount of time, but it is possible everywhere and therefore obligatory. In view of the successes already achieved, we think that our organisations will everywhere prove equal to this task, very easily and very quickly. At any rate, things will go all the more easily, all the more quickly, the more relentlessly they are guided by it in all their activity.

The Russian revolutionary movement as a whole has always greatly suffered from a one-sided enthusiasm for some favoured method of struggle or other which, under certain conditions, has produced favourable results. Russian revolutionaries have always suffered from an inclination to promote some method of struggle to the status of a principle, to a panacea. Here is not the place to expand on the reasons for this unfortunate phenomenon. We only note that it is easy for our Social-Democratic organisation to avoid such one-sidedness – both thanks to the experience of our predecessors and especially thanks to the *class* character of the Social-Democratic movement, which is linked to the mass struggle of the proletariat.

The vital interests of the working class lead it towards *political* struggle. The requirements of purely economic struggle compel the workers to put forward political demands and to fight for political freedom.

Therefore, the one-sided enthusiasm for the economic struggle has become just as impossible for Social Democrats as has the pursuit of a political struggle that is not linked to the class interests of the proletariat. However, the Social Democrats have to work under those same dreadful police conditions as earlier revolutionaries and these conditions lead to insularity, to a greater or lesser degree of isolation of individual local organisations and – this is even worse – to a rapid turnover of activists, who are forever being torn away from work by arrests. The isolation of individual organisations partially weakens that positive influence of the experience of the most advanced localities that we

spoke about earlier. The rapid replacement of activists disturbs the continuity of experience within the confines of one and the same organisation. And this has an all the more harmful effect in so far as we do not have a strong central organisation and no central Party newspaper.<sup>19</sup> That is why, if one-sided enthusiasm for economic campaigns is impossible, then in individual localities where circumstances are more unfavourable, the *slowing down* of the political development of the working masses and marching too long on the same spot, at the initial stage of pure-economic struggle, is entirely possible.

The predominance of the local movement over that of the whole class, an exaggerated attention to local peculiarities along with a *literal and therefore false understanding of the mass factor* can lead to the same result and for the very same reasons. If we were to delay political agitation until the point at which the whole of the masses, or even a majority of them, became receptive to political demands, then we would risk holding up their political growth for a long time. We recall that in the more developed Western countries up to this time, the majority of workers have [not] joined the Social-Democratic Party nor even the workers' trade unions. Every Social-Democratic Party fights for demands which are in the interests of the *entire* proletariat and even in the common interests of the entire working population. But they, naturally, do not delay agitation for one or another demand until the whole of the public, or even a majority of it has become receptive to it. Not the unconscious elements of the masses, which have been standing aside from struggle for decades in some cases, but its active, vital, fighting elements – its advanced detachment – define the tactics of the Social-Democratic Party. This is exactly how we should act in Russia wherever the masses have already brought forward an advanced detachment of fighters.

Thus, to pass as quickly as possible from purely-economic campaigns to agitation for immediate political demands and then, as soon as possible, to expand the content of political agitation – this is the basic tactical rule, obligatory for all our organisations.

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19 Organisational questions go beyond the limits of this article. But as an aside, we wish to point out that the serious organisational unity of our local committees and the creation of a central Party newspaper is also urgently necessary in the name of a tactical unity which would *qualitatively* increase the growth of our movement and speed the growth of class and political consciousness among workers. The example of 'People's Will' shows that a central organisation – in one form or another – is possible under Russian police conditions [Krichevskii's footnote].

All those who relate to strikes with that 'transcendental'<sup>20</sup> scorn, which caused Marx to reproach Proudhon and his co-thinkers, are at odds with the doctrine of Marx. But a strike is of the greatest benefit to the working class if an agitator, using all the political content contained within it, transforms it into a graphic lesson for the political education of the masses. Short-sighted or blind are those who see *different tendencies* in the *different stages* of our movement in separate localities. But our entire organisation is obliged to aim at the quickest possible raising of the level of the movement everywhere, and through this at the *acceleration of its tactical unification*. Our Party should be just as united in practice as it is in its programme.

Expanding the content of political agitation and the tactical unification of our movement at the *highest* level – the latter is indissolubly linked to the former – is our daily work and the result of unceasing efforts. Work in this direction can and should be especially successful on the occasion of the *May Day celebrations*. We have already spoken more than once about the great significance of this celebration (see the May issue of *Rabochee Delo* for 1899 and 1900). For the present we will only note that our organisation has not worked out united tactics in connection with the May celebrations. We will not yet speak of the fact that, in centres of the Russian workers' movement, the May strike and demonstration has up to now proved to be a rare exception and that the examples of the Polish and Jewish workers have found too few imitators: the May strikes and demonstrations demand very serious efforts and preparation and are too often made impossible as a consequence of mass arrests on the eve of the event. But there is no unity where unity is entirely possible – in the *May Day proclamations* which are published by our committees. Proclamations are too much adapted to local peculiarities, local and partial demands occupy too great a place, sometimes pushing into the background *whole-class and political* demands, which should be centre-stage.

All proclamations accentuate the *international* character of the May celebration. Why do they not accentuate an energetic struggle for political freedom in a similar manner? Is internationalism really a concept more accessible to the masses than political freedom? More likely, it is the other way round: our average worker undoubtedly has a much more foggy idea of the links between the struggle of Russian workers and the workers' movements of other countries than of the connection of political freedom with his vital interests, links which he himself has experienced during strikes and which tens of thousands of workers are experiencing within the borders of Russia.

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20 Supersensory, based not on observation and experience but on preconceived, abstract ideas [Krichevskii's footnote].

In general, the link between political agitation and economic campaigns should not be understood exclusively in the sense that the first should always and everywhere be *directly* linked to the second. Indeed on May Day, there is no such direct link, nor can there usually be such a link. The workers of one or another town can organise a strike on the occasion of 1 May with partial demands directed towards a given owner; but whole-class, political demands and not this strike would define the character of the 1 May celebrations. In proportion to the growth of our movement, political agitation should decisively encompass all questions of socio-political life, as all of these in one way or another touch on the class interests of the proletariat. In accordance with this, the programme of *Raboochee Delo* declares:

Apart from the clashes of the working masses with governmental power on the basis of economic campaigns, all the important facts of Russian life touching on the interests of the broad mass of working people and showing the enmity towards them of the tsarist government can be occasions for political agitation and propaganda: famine, new laws, tendencies towards still greater oppression of the people or to the enrichment at their expense of the factory-owners, the gentry and so on.

The class character of the workers' movement does not in the least consist in the isolation of the proletariat from other oppressed classes – so much the less in Russia with her millions of peasants, who suffer from capitalism and the autocracy no less than the proletariat. It demands only that the proletariat defines all our activity in all circumstances and serves as a guiding thread in our tactics. But precisely the interests of the proletariat oblige it to fight for all the oppressed and in union with them:

Only in the fight for the interests and rights of *all* working people against *all* forms of economic, political, national and religious oppression will the Russian Social Democracy fulfil its historic task: *the overthrow of the autocracy and the full economic and political liberation of the working class* (*Programme of Raboochee Delo*).

The expansion of political agitation in this direction raises up the proletariat in its own consciousness – and not only in theory – to the role of the advanced detachment of all those oppressed by capitalism and the autocracy, and thus increases its revolutionary-political strength tenfold.

To summarise: economic struggle is the eternally living source of our movement. It accustoms the proletariat to concerted activity, to organisation, gives

it its first notions about class solidarity and awakens it to political struggle. The transitional stages in the activity of our organisation are: purely-economic agitation, political agitation with an immediate link to economic campaigns, at first for immediate political demands and then for our whole political programme; political agitation that does not have a direct link with the economic campaigns of the proletariat or its immediate interests – right up to agitation with regard to the general-political problems of the day, concerning the proletariat in its capacity as the advance detachment of all the oppressed in the struggle with the autocracy.

It stands to reason that, even where the movement has attained a high level, methods of agitation corresponding to a lower level will, as before, play an important role. In particular, political agitation directly linked to economic struggle will preserve its predominant significance at all stages of development, and even the original approach of purely-economic agitation can coexist with the most extensive political agitation where the former is directed towards sections of workers still not touched by the movement. In a word, every higher transitional stage also includes those stages already passed through and the methods of agitation corresponding to them.

The guiding rule of activity is the quickest possible attainment of a high political level whilst all the time preserving the mass character of the movement – the speeding up of the political education of the working masses. All methods of struggle should be subordinated to this goal, as only the political education of the proletariat will ensure success in the fight for freedom, and only freedom will secure success in the next struggle of the proletariat for its final liberation, for socialism.

Indefatigably working in this direction, the Social-Democratic Party in Russia, as in the West, will merge with the fighting proletariat and will forge a powerful hammer in the furnace of the class struggle which will smash the chains of the autocracy to pieces.

## ‘A Historic Turn’, *Listok Rabochego Dela* No. 6

*In the summer of 1900, following the failure of the project to relaunch Rabochaia Gazeta, and whilst the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group and the Lenin group were still negotiating over Iskra and Zaria, Rabochee Delo launched its own newspaper-like ‘supplement’, Listok Rabochego Dela, eight issues of which appeared over the following 12 months. In making this decision, it imitated that of its predecessor, Rabotnik, which had also started to produce a ‘supplement’ abroad after efforts to produce a newspaper by sympathisers inside Russia had come to nought.<sup>1</sup> Aside from acting as a rival to Iskra, the aim of the Listok appears to have been that of informing RSDLP activists in Russia about the most recent developments and salient issues in both the revolutionary movement itself and in Russian politics in general, only occasionally interpreting them in the light of the Union Abroad’s version of Social-Democratic ideas. Its main aim was not to clarify or broaden the theoretical understanding of the readership – this was the remit of Rabochee Delo – but to keep them up-to-date with current affairs.*

*In line with this function, several issues of the Listok communicated a great deal of useful information concerning the student movement, detailing its activities, aims, achievements and the repression meted out to it by the state.<sup>2</sup> However, today the Listok is probably best remembered – if it is remembered at all – for the*

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1 During their time as editors of the Union Abroad’s publications (1895–8), the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group at first only produced *Rabotnik*, a ‘thick’ theoretical journal, as there was a plan for the St. Petersburg ‘Union of Struggle’ to produce the newspaper, *Rabochee Delo*. This plan failed as a result of police action in December 1895. *Listok Rabotnika* (‘Supplement to *Rabotnik*’) began to appear the following year, seemingly as a replacement to *Rabochee Delo*, and this was also published by the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group. It seems that, with the failure of *Rabochaia Gazeta*, the ‘Economist’ Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* made a similar decision, though evidently the Lenin circle had a rival plan for a Social-Democratic newspaper, which had no obvious connections to an émigré journal, in the form of *Iskra*.

2 See, for example, S.N. 1901a. In this article, a protest by seven hundred students is described in response to the expulsion of two students who refused to go to an on-campus ‘punishment cell’ for having organised an illegal meeting. The article describes how the two expelled students were accompanied to the railway station by a crowd of their colleagues who occupied the first-class waiting room, where political speeches were made, beer was drunk and flowers were presented to the expelled students. Later, a meeting took place at the university to demand the abolition of the ‘punishment cell’ and the reinstatement of the expelled students, at which point the Rector of the university called in the Cossacks, who occupied



*editorial statement 'A Historic Turn,' which was pilloried by Lenin in his reply to it, 'Where To Begin?';<sup>3</sup> which is widely regarded as an early sketch for the pamphlet, What Is To Be Done? This editorial statement jars so notably with some of the earlier statements in Rabochee Delo – Krichevskii's article in No. 7 in particular – that it could scarcely hope to avoid a certain amount of hostile critical scrutiny, especially as it also raised the question of whether Russian revolutionaries should return to the assassination tactics earlier practiced by 'People's Will,' at a time when the followers of Plekhanov and Lenin had long since broken with this policy.*

*'A Historic Turn' appeared in Listok Rabochego Dela No. 6, in April 1901, following months of demonstrations by students against the government's 'Temporary Regulations' concerning universities, which had been introduced in July 1899. These had placed severe restrictions on the right of students to hold assemblies and form associations at university, and apparently stipulated that students could be detained in on-campus prison cells and that those in breach of the regulations could be drafted into the army as punishment. 183 students studying in Kiev suffered this fate in January 1901 as a result of illegal meetings the previous December, which had rapidly developed into a demonstration involving hundreds of townspeople, including workers, once the university authorities attempted to use Cossacks to disperse the students.<sup>4</sup> In response to this development, demonstrations against the Temporary Regulations took place in several towns during February and March, each of which took on a broader anti-autocratic character as sections of the general public joined in, witnessing at first hand further violence on the part of various military and police units.*

*Within the Rabochee Delo camp, these rapidly escalating events appear to have provoked a challenge to Krichevskii's conception of workers' consciousness developing in accordance with well-defined stages. Workers who had participated in the demonstrations had arguably expressed solidarity with an oppressed group from a different class – the student youth – yet according to Krichevskii, such a sophisticated level of political consciousness could only emerge among workers if they had previously experienced bonds of solidarity within their own workplace and in their own branch of industry, and after having participated in general movement of the working class in defence of*

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the university with the aid of sabres and a field gun among other weaponry. A student rally in sympathy took place at local polytechnic and demonstrations took place outside the university involving students and townspeople, according to the article. It is claimed that each of these involved several hundred participants.

3 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 13–24.

4 See footnote 2 of this chapter.

its own interests. Moreover, for workers to demand 'political freedom' – the main slogan of workers on one of the Kiev demonstrations, if the author of 'A Historic Turn' is to be believed – a preparatory stage in which they fought for specific rights directly connected to their immediate material interests, such as the right to strike, would have been necessary, according to Krichevskii's argument.

Whilst defenders of Krichevskii's views might point to May Day demonstrations as previous instances of high-level political consciousness among workers, it seems that the author of 'A Historic Turn' simply preferred to call for an immediate change in tactics, disregarding any previous statements published in *Rabochee Delo* and showing little interest in either reconciling his own views with these statements or in providing a detailed refutation of Krichevskii's argument.<sup>5</sup> This blunt demand for a 'turn' in *Rabochee Delo*'s line was in itself revealing, as it appears to acknowledge that, prior to the unrest of early 1901, the Russian Social Democrats had indeed been pursuing an 'Economist' policy, one based on the 'grey, peaceful situation . . . characterised by a general collapse of the revolutionary spirit'. With these words, the author of the editorial implicitly rejects Krichevskii's agitation strategy, and in so doing seems to precipitate a whole series of remarks in the latter's article, 'Principles, Tactics and Struggle', published in *Rabochee Delo* No. 10,<sup>6</sup> in which the latter tries to explain a special 'philosophy of tactics' that would permit his own views to be compatible with those expressed in 'A Historic Turn'.

'A Historic Turn' provoked a dense and confusing web of intrigue in the emigration, as is evident from the correspondence exchanged between Lenin, Plekhanov and Axelrod during this period.<sup>7</sup> According to these sources, its first effects were the temporary defection of three key Paris-based Iskra supporters to the side of the Union Abroad.<sup>8</sup> Whilst this change of loyalties may simply have been motivated by a perception that *Rabochee Delo* was moving to the left, Plekhanov and Lenin interpreted it as being motivated at least in part by a desire for self-advancement. Following the publication of 'A Historic Turn', speculation seems to have emerged among the Plekhanovites that Krichevskii's days as an editor of *Rabochee Delo* were numbered. This caused Plekhanov in particular to attribute

5 This failure to debate Krichevskii may in part have been due to the role of *Listok Rabocheho Dela* noted above – it was not intended to be a theoretical journal.

6 See Chapter 9 of the collection.

7 Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 3, pp. 160–74.

8 These were: David Borisovich Riazanov (1870–1938), Iuri Mikhailovich Nakhamkes ('Steklov', 'Nevzorov') (1873–1941) and Emmanuel L'vovich Gurevich (1865 or 1866–1952). Riazanov later went on to be a noted scholar, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute and publisher of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* in the 1930s.

base motivations to the defections, members of the Paris group having previously denied editorial roles in *Iskra*, though their services had been retained as ordinary correspondents and fund raisers. Lenin began to worry that further defections would occur:

His response to this loss of support was a more active intervention in the emigration of the part of *Iskra* than had previously been anticipated. In the first issue of the newspaper, Lenin had been careful to maintain a distant attitude to the ongoing conflict between the Plekhanovites and Rabochee Delo, formally stating *Iskra*'s sympathy with the views of Plekhanov whilst at the same time expressing hopes of a reconciliation between the two sides, at some future Second Congress of the RSDLP.<sup>9</sup> This diplomatic attitude displeased Plekhanov, who demanded, but initially failed to obtain, a more partisan statement of position from *Iskra*.<sup>10</sup> His wish was eventually granted with the appearance of 'A Historic Turn'. Lenin evidently regarded the article as ludicrous, not only because of its exaggerated, melodramatic rhetoric, but also because it failed to reckon in the slightest with the previous views of Rabochee Delo, thus revealing a political instability which added new layers of complexity to the prospects of a settlement between the Union Abroad and the émigré supporters of Plekhanov. On this basis, a new policy was developed by Lenin for the latter. Preparations were made for a consolidation of the various Plekhanovite émigré circles, publications and printing operations into one unified 'League Abroad', which would openly fight the influence of the Union Abroad in the RSDLP. Lenin's criticisms of 'A Historic Turn' were thus stated very clearly in the leading article of *Iskra* No. 4, ('Where To Begin?'), and a further article by Martov criticising Rabochee Delo's attitude to terror appeared in the same issue.<sup>11</sup>

Curiously, *Iskra* did not stick to this new policy for long. According to the correspondence between Lenin and Axelrod, the Parisian group was not successful in acquiring positions in the Editorial Board of Rabochee Delo and they soon started to present themselves as an independent group, 'Struggle', dedicated towards the reunification of the Social-Democratic emigration. With this new development, Lenin appears to have rethought his attitude to Rabochee Delo once again, this time abandoning the plan for a rival 'League Abroad' for the time being. Now he gave support to the conciliatory initiative of the Parisian group, concluding that an inclusive 'Foreign Committee of the RSDLP', which would support the efforts of all pro-RSDLP publications, was the best solution, urging the émigré Plekhanovites to do the same. Indeed, the plan promoted by 'Struggle'

9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 378–9.

10 Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 3, pp. 116–17.

11 S.N. 1901c.

*soon received the support of all the émigré circles, who perhaps sensed that their antagonistic relations would undermine their intervention in an increasingly radicalised Russian society.*

## A Historic Turn

On 14 July 1789, when the Parisian people, who had risen up, stormed the Bastille, Louis XVI exclaimed with angry bewilderment: 'Why, this is a riot!' 'No, your highness', answered a courtier to the slow-witted king, *'it's a revolution'*.

And what does our own feeble-minded 'Louis' – Nicholas II – think about recent events in Russia? Has a lackey been found to explain their true meaning? It makes no difference. If Nicholas II or, more precisely, the ministers thinking for him, happen to see in the February and March events nothing more than a 'riot' or 'mass disturbances', owing to old habits – so much the worse for tsarism. The short-sightedness of despots always serves the cause of freedom.

Since the time when the revolutionary movement was born in Russia, tsarism has *never* been threatened by such dangers as those which now exist. The months of February and March have once again lived up to their old revolutionary glory. They lay down the basis of a new era.

Events broke out 'suddenly', with overwhelming elemental force, sharply distinguishing themselves from grey, everyday life like all things truly historic, bursting forth from a shell under which profound internal processes were hidden like all revolutionary explosions, and revealing in one moment the work of long, unnoticed molecular forces and transforming the whole country as with every *historic turn*. This slow, drawn-out evolutionary process first came to light in the form of a revolutionary explosion. The accumulated combustible material was seized by a powerful flame originating from one small spark. And if at present one cannot say anything definite about the *immediate* direction of events, if it is possible that now there will be a *temporary* lull, then at any rate our homeland has been changed by the February and March events. *Many, if not all revolutions in Western Europe, started with less threatening occurrences.*

In a word, if the hour of the revolution has still not struck, properly speaking, then Russia has undoubtedly entered into a period characterised by the

unprecedented exertion of revolutionary forces, into a period of immediate preparation for the *decisive battle with the autocracy*.

Russia is experiencing a new upsurge in revolutionary energy far exceeding the revolutionary scope of the end of the 1870s. Then, a handful of heroes, 'de-classed' intellectuals, who were just as isolated from the broad mass of conscious workers, fought; now, following the initiative of students and revolutionary organisations, *the mass of urban workers* have entered into active struggle with the autocracy – they have entered into struggle in the literal sense – and in doing so, as was ever the case in revolutionary situations, a broad layer of 'ordinary people', diffuse in the sense of their class, all the lower-class elements of the urban population, all those insulted and humiliated by the current system, have united with them. Those thousands and tens of thousands of workers and ordinary people who demonstrated and who, in response to the whip, fought to the death with the cossacks and the constabulary in Kharkov, Moscow and Kiev; those thousands and tens of thousands of St. Petersburg workers whom the government prudently surrounded with troops on 4 (17) March and against whom on 11 [24] March, the same government put up a total of six field guns at both ends of Nevskii Prospect, directing them onto Kazan Square, the place of the demonstration and the fight – these thousands and tens of thousands of fighters are but the first detachment of our revolutionary army.<sup>12</sup>

The workers of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov and Kiev have discovered *a political idea and revolutionary flair* which at this stage was probably not expected by either a single Social Democrat or a single revolutionary in general. Especially striking are the Moscow events. In backward Moscow, where the entire population, including the workers, seemed for many reasons to be distinguished by a conservative mood and a profound devotion to their autocratic 'home of the throne and the altar', that very same 'loyal' Moscow to which Alexander III thought of transferring the capital to aid the strengthening of his rule – a most powerful explosion of popular protest took place precisely there.

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12 These remarks refer to a wave of demonstrations which originated among university students during the academic year 1900–1 that were directed against the government's 'Temporary Regulations' of 1899, which forbade students from holding meetings and forming organisations. In many cases, broader layers of the population, including workers, joined these protests, giving them a more general anti-autocratic character. The demonstrations were broken up with use of cossacks, troops and police, resulting in the killing of demonstrators and mass arrests. Detailed reports of these protests can be found in *Listok Rabochego Dela* No. 5 and in *Iskra* No. 2 & No. 3. See also: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 414–19.

On the other hand, it is for a good reason that the sad state of the conscious Social-Democratic movement among Moscow workers is a secret to nobody. And what of it? Thousands or even tens of thousands of workers who were little exposed, or to be more precise, entirely unexposed, to Social-Democratic influence, participated in a *political* protest not linked to their immediate interests and directed against the highest representative of the autocracy in Moscow, against the tsarist governor-general, the Grand Prince Sergei!<sup>13</sup>

No less remarkable is the Kiev demonstration of 11 (24) March in response to a combined appeal by the Kiev committee of the RSDLP and the Union Council of the Kiev Students, with its fifteen to twenty thousand participants. It is the *first* purely and clearly political demonstration in Kiev. For the first time, the Kiev workers demonstrated in a crowd many thousands strong, under a red banner on which was inscribed a death-sentence to the autocracy: '*For Political Freedom*'.

We do not want to deceive ourselves with illusions. Naturally, the protest of the masses was not completely conscious in every instance, and not all '*extraneous*' participants in demonstrations – as that false and timid government communication describes workers and factory hands – clearly understood the significance of the historical event they themselves had created. But where and when was the *revolutionary creativity of the masses* entirely conscious? And is a peremptory revolutionary *feeling*, having drawn the thousands out into the street, really an insufficiently clear and powerful sign of their revolutionary maturity? Does not the fact that the workers, at the call of the revolutionary organisations, so dearly took to heart tsarist violence against students testify to their political maturity?

Yes, these '*extraneous*' elements not only *took into their hands* the cause of the students as *their own vital cause*; they also deepened and broadened the student disturbances, which originally had an academic content, to the scale of a *general-political protest against the autocracy*. Thanks to these '*extraneous elements*', a henceforth indissoluble *revolutionary pact between the workers and the intelligentsia* was sealed in the heat of battle with a common enemy, the boundless mutual trust and understanding of the two most important

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13 Sergei Alexandrovich Romanov (1857–1905), Grand Duke of Russia, was a son of Alexander II and the governor-general of Moscow from 1891–1905. In this post he was answerable only to his father and he adopted repressive and anti-Semitic policies. He ordered the expulsion of twenty thousand non-bourgeois Jews from Moscow, who were ordered to re-settle in the Western territories, the 'Pale of Settlement'; women that remained were obliged to register as prostitutes. He was responsible for imposing strict ideological controls in the universities and was assassinated by revolutionaries in February 1905.

revolutionary elements in Russia – the main, class force of the proletariat and the *ideological* force of the revolutionary intelligentsia – was printed with the blood of the Kazan Square fatalities.

Let the autocratic government tremble before the 'extraneous', whose real name they dare not pronounce! They are an 'alien power' from its perspective: the autocratic 'gates of Hell' cannot withstand it!

Also 'extraneous' were those masses of Parisian working folk in whom revolutionary instinct prompted the destruction of the Bastille fortress – the Peter-Paul fortress or the Schlüsselberg of the French autocracy – where they locked away not workers, but 'state criminals' 'extraneous' to them.

Let the autocracy also tremble before the fact that the demonstrations took place, and will continue to take place, under the red banner of the international socialist proletariat, the symbol of an invincible revolutionary force which is not overpowered by brutal persecution and which is not won round by paltry concessions. Yes, the 'extraneous' ones gave *their own* class banner to the students. Now the blood of workers is mixed with the blood of students on the red banner – from now on, the proletarian banner will be flying in the foremost ranks of all freedom fighters, increasing their strength tenfold, leading them to victory. Decisive battle will be given to the autocracy under *the banner of socialism*.

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Will the hour of this battle strike soon? Nobody can say. Only one thing is certain: the revolutionary organisations of all tendencies, including the strongest of them, our Social-Democratic committees, were caught unawares by the breaking storm. They were taken unawares in consequence of a chronic number of mass arrests, in consequence of the suddenness and impetuously rapid course of events, and partially (why should we hide it?) in consequence of that stagnation pertaining to all organisations which have adapted to a certain type and tempo of activity. To repeat, many, if not all, revolutions in Western Europe, started with less threatening events. Had we furnished our Party with a strong fighting organisation and the corresponding forces, it would *already* have found firm ground for a *direct* and *mass* assault on the autocracy!

In Russia, we have a good thermometer for taking the temperature of the revolution, a thermometer which can least of all encourage exaggeration, altogether too optimistic ideas, owing to the fact that it always stands short and gives a cautious reading several degrees lower than reality. We are speaking of the mood of the liberal part of 'society', the older generation of the intelligentsia, which absorbs revolutionary impressions with such difficulty. And what



does it show? Finally, liberal society is also stirring and becoming agitated. The powerful breath of revolution has enlivened and put heart into our liberals. They have once again, as in all periods in which there is a revolutionary upsurge, begun to talk of a constitution. More than that, in their own way, in the form of a petition, they are starting to organise political protests; their mood has been raised so much that they are once again expecting a constitution.

Yes, the revolutionary temperature is high and, perhaps, it is already close to boiling point. Unfortunately, the forces of the revolutionary organisations have, as of yet, proved insufficient for the conversion of this heat into energy. There is a base in the revolutionary mood of the working masses, but we do not yet have the organisational forces capable of leading the masses in an *immediate* attack against the autocracy.

But we can and should *fundamentally change our tactics*, and the sooner and more irrevocably we do it, the better! The old 'soldier of the revolution', Wilhelm Liebknecht,<sup>14</sup> said: 'If circumstances change in 24 hours, then it is necessary to change tactics in 24 hours'. Activity reckoning on a grey, peaceful situation, on a period characterised by the general collapse of the revolutionary spirit, on the slow, evolutionary growth of the consciousness of the working masses, on the systematic education of them, so to speak, on a journey from the simple to the complex, from the near to the further away – such activity would be a *fatal mistake* at a moment characterised by a rapid upsurge of revolutionary efforts, when every day, having brought active struggle against the autocracy, revolutionises the masses much more quickly than whole years of peaceful propaganda and agitation.

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14 Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) was one of the pioneers of Social Democracy in Germany. He was a participant in the 1848 revolutions and a member of the Communist League, the international political organisation which Marx and Engels helped create, and for which they wrote the *Communist Manifesto*. He became their long-term ally. Having spent many years as a refugee, he returned to Germany in 1862, joining the General German Workers' Association, a legal and reformist political party. He broke with this organisation later in the decade, eventually helping to found the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Germany (nicknamed 'Eisenachers') in 1869, which was pro-First International and sympathetic to the ideas of Marx and Engels. He supported the unification of the 'Eisenachers' with the GGWA in 1875 over the opposition of Marx, whose *Critique of the Gotha Programme* summarised the latter's scepticism towards the ideological consequences of this union. Liebknecht opposed the Franco-Prussian War in 1870–1, a stance for which he was subsequently persecuted and gaoled, but he was also elected to the Reichstag. From 1891 he edited the SPD central newspaper *Vorwärts*, and he also played a role in the drafting of the Party's 'Erfurt' programme. His obituary (by Pavel Axelrod) appears on the front page of the first issue of *Iskra*.

The workers of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Kharkov grew during the months of February and March by a whole head, they were *qualitatively transformed*, they *thirsted after revolutionary action*. And all Russian workers will be transformed together with them once the good news about the revolutionary exploits of this spearhead of the proletariat becomes known. If our Party wants to be, and to remain, the spokesman of the proletariat, its organised vanguard, it should not lose a minute in radically changing its tactics, in adapting to radically changed conditions. *All* committees and groups of our Party should immediately respond to the new, revolutionary and political mood of the broad public, and *clarify* and *strengthen* this mood.

Never has there been a more opportune moment for broad, revolutionary, political agitation among the masses and for political demonstrations in particular.

We are delighted to report that the Kharkov and Kiev committees of our Party correctly judged the situation, having turned to the workers with appeals for political demonstrations. Also correctly judging the situation were the united St. Petersburg groups, *Rabochee Znamia* and 'Socialist',<sup>15</sup> who called on the workers to demonstrate on 11 [24] March. And we have reasons for asserting that committees who have up to this point not responded to events are trying to make up for lost time.

It is also with great pleasure that we note the proclamation of the Kharkov Committee, 'To Society': it expresses a view of our Party that is in keeping with the entire spirit of Social Democracy: *it is the vanguard of all opposition forces in the struggle with the autocracy*.

Our responsibility, and the responsibility of all our committees and groups is to prove the truth of this view with our *activity*. We will achieve this if we go *beyond* the revolutionary mood of the working masses, responding to every event of these stormy times, sharply criticising every act of governmental arbitrariness and violence, *linking all incidents and governmental measures to the fundamental evil – the autocracy*, always and everywhere explaining to the

15 *Rabochee Znamia* was an organisation of St. Petersburg supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group at a time when the 'Economist' supporters of *Rabochaia Mysl'* were dominant in the city. Among its members were Sergei Osipovich Tsederbaum (1879–1939) and Viktor Pavlovich Nogin (1878–1924), the first of these being Martov's elder brother, whereas the second later became a well-known Moscow Bolshevik, after whom towns and streets in Russia are still named. The group emerged in 1897 and produced a newspaper from 1899. *Socialist* existed in St. Petersburg from the summer of 1900 to January 1901, at which point it merged with *Rabochee Znamia*. By this time, some of the main figures in *Rabochee Znamia* were working as *Iskra* agents, and it seems likely that the united group went on to serve as an *Iskra* support group in St. Petersburg.

masses the historical and revolutionary significance of the current moment, tirelessly calling them *to political action and to street protests against all tsarist violence*.

The historical moment has also placed before our Party a completely new question. *The gun shots of Karpovich and Lagovskii*,<sup>16</sup> and the warm sympathy with which they were met in the ranks of the youth and all revolutionary elements in general, clearly shows that the *white terror* of the tsarist government has once again created, with the inevitable force of a law of nature, the basis for a *red terror* on the part of revolutionaries. Our Party organisations cannot and should not ignore this fact or avoid it with silence. They should *jointly* decide what position they are to take *together* in relation to terror.

Finally, we touch on a most pressing task which does not permit postponement – the *preparation of the May Day festivities*. The march of events, quickened by a short-sighted government that is purely Asiatic in its cruelty, has already transferred the centre of gravity – time now travels so fast! – from the movement for academic freedom to a political movement directed against the autocracy, and the most important active agent of this political struggle is already in reality the proletariat. In these circumstances, the approaching *May Day celebration* has a quite extraordinary significance. All committees and groups of our Party should *exert all their efforts* towards organising street demonstrations with a decisively political character. And in view of the extraordinary situation, in view of the upsurge of revolutionary energy amongst the intelligentsia and the revolutionary mood being revealed in all the labouring sections of the urban population – our Party organisation should on this occasion *call not just proletarians, but all anti-government forces to participate in the May Day demonstrations* – from the student youth to the mass of ‘ordinary

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16 Petr Vladimirovich Karpovich (1874–1917) shot and mortally wounded Minister of Education Nikolai Pavlovich Boglepov (born 1846) in February 1901 in protest at the latter’s suppression of student protest using troops. In March of the same year, Nikolai Lagovskii (born 1871 or 1872) fired an inaccurate shot at Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev (1827–1907), procurator of the General Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and member of the Imperial Council, a leading judicial and legislative body responsible only to the tsar. Pobedonostsev was firmly opposed to liberal and democratic reform and had advocated anti-Semitic legislation during the reign of Alexander III. Lagovskii was sentenced to six years hard labour and Karpovich received 20 years, but escaped after five. Karpovich was later a member of the Party of Social Revolutionaries (‘Essars’) who died at sea when a ship carrying émigrés back to Russia after the February Revolution was sunk by a German submarine. The translator has uncovered no details about the later life of Lagovskii, though he appears to have been a fairly incidental figure, who was unattached to any organisation at the time of his assassination attempt.

people’ in the towns. This year, the class holiday of the proletariat can and should unite all revolutionary forces, making it into a day of general political protest on the part of the enemies of the autocracy, *a day for uniting all revolutionary forces under the class banner of the proletariat.*

New times mean new tasks. The historic turn in the life of our homeland demands a change in all our tactics. The entire future of the RSDLP depends on whether it can manage to display the revolutionary energy necessary for the current moment, and it needs much of this if it is to be equal to all the new tasks. Otherwise, the rising wave of the revolutionary movement will not lift up our Party, but will on the contrary cast it down into the depths.

We will direct all our efforts towards ensuring that the Social Democracy is to be found standing firm on the foaming crest of the revolutionary wave.

At the present time, only boldness is prudent.

We will always remember that revolution rejects those who do not recognise her menacing footsteps from a distance. Go to meet her comrades, and you will quicken her pace!

For that new, and for the first time mass assault on the fortress of despotism: form assault columns!

Our Bastille is still not destroyed, but the storming of it has already begun – hurry to the first ranks of the assault columns!

The Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo*.

## Resolution of an Émigré RSDLP Conference, June 1901, Geneva

*According to the commonly-agreed plan, representatives from the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad (Akimov), Rabochee Delo (Krichevskii), the 'Struggle' group (Steklov & Gurevich), the Revolutionary Organisation 'Social Democrat'<sup>1</sup> (Koltsov), Zaria<sup>2</sup> (Plekhanov) and Iskra (Martov) met in Geneva in June 1901 to discuss the reunification of the Social-Democratic emigration. Three Bundist émigrés also attended, but probably did not vote or take part in decision making, owing to the organisation's established preference for a greater degree of independence from the RSDLP than was granted in the arrangement approved by the Party's First Congress. At the meeting, a resolution was taken that supposedly expressed a common ideological position on the basis of which all the émigré circles could be united into one organisation, provisionally entitled the 'Foreign Committee of the RSDLP'. The identity of the resolution's author remains unclear,<sup>3</sup> and it first appeared in a 1901 pamphlet by Rabochee Delo editor Martynov, entitled Two Conferences.*

- 1 These were the followers of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, who left the Union Abroad at its Second Congress in April 1900
- 2 *Zaria* was a theoretical journal that was nominally edited by the three members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group: Georgii Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich and Pavel Axelrod and which was intended to serve as a venue for debates around the programme of the RSDLP. However, unlike *Iskra*, it sought to abide by German law, which was often hostile to Russian revolutionaries, and was put together by a sufficiently well-known publisher of Social-Democratic literature, Dietz of Stuttgart. Consequently it did not openly state its adherence to the RSDLP, presenting itself instead as a journal of the Social-Democratic émigré intelligentsia, somewhat in contrast to *Iskra*, which sought to project the image of a publication closely connected to the Russian underground and the RSDLP, with the effect that some émigrés believed that it actually was published in Russia. In reality, editorial work on *Zaria* was carried out mainly by the same group who organised *Iskra* – the 'Emancipation of Labour' group plus Lenin, Martov and Potresov, with Lenin and Martov probably doing the lion's share of the work. Three issues appeared between March 1901 and August 1902, the second of which was a 'double issue', leaving four volumes in total.
- 3 Lenin later observed that the resolution was read out at the meeting by 'Comrade Kruglov', (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 226). This was Mikhail Grigorievich Kogan (1874–1942), better known by the pseudonym Viktor Grinevich, an 'Economist'-minded student in Berlin who attended the meeting on behalf of the Bund.

*In reality, this resolution was a blunt and detailed Plekhanovite manifesto stating the principles, tactics and immediate tasks of Russian Social Democracy from what its author terms a 'revolutionary Marxist' perspective. It stressed the importance of overthrowing the autocracy and rejected the possibility of its mean-  
ingful reform. It conceded absolutely no ground to the distinct views expressed in Rabochee Delo during the previous period: the notion that the 'principles of scientific socialism' needed to be combined with a consideration of 'concrete conditions and workers' demands'; as stated in the programme of Rabochee Delo; the denial of the existence of 'Economism' in the review of Lenin's Tasks; the desire to examine the revisionist debate from all sides as stated in the 'Announcement' in Rabochee Delo No. 5; and the 'stagist' approach to agitation advocated by Krichevskii in Rabochee Delo No. 7.*

*Curiously, it seems that both Krichevskii and Akimov, the two main representatives of the Rabochee Delo trend at the conference, actually voted through this partisan statement of 'common ground'.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for this are not immediately obvious: they could have felt intimidated in the presence of opponents more versed in theory or have been persuaded that, being in a minority position,<sup>5</sup> resistance was futile. Alternatively, a genuine radicalisation in their views owing to the February–March events, or a misguided attempt to make peace with their factional opponents by agreeing to demands which, because they were merely theoretical, would not have any impact on reality, could have taken place. One further possibility is that they were once again anticipating an attempt at an*

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4 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 225–6.

5 It seems that the Plekhanovites packed the Geneva meeting to a certain degree, as representatives from several numerically small organisations and publications with an overlapping membership (the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, 'Social Democrat', *Iskra* and *Zaria*) attended. Against these, the delegates from *Rabochee Delo* and the Union Abroad represented 'Economism'. The fact that four pro-Plekhanov organisations were represented seems significant in so far as Lenin, at this stage, was evidently prepared to advocate a 'federal' form of organisation to a reunited Social-Democratic emigration, one which would on the one hand give each organisation a significant degree of independence, but which would at the same time grant each an equivalent weight in any decision-making process, regardless of the actual size of its membership. Thus, possessing four 'organisations', the pro-Plekhanov group would dominate the 'Economists', who possessed just two, assuming the Bund representatives did not consider themselves to be a separate party in the conflict dividing the 'Russian' émigrés and did not get involved (which appears to have been the case – their three delegates only observed the meeting), and assuming 'Struggle', in keeping with its reconciling role, remained neutral. See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 241–2; Vol. 36, pp. 67–9 for evidence of Lenin's thinking in this manner.

*RSDLP Congress later in the year which would have overturned any gains made by the Plekhanovites at the émigré meeting.*<sup>6</sup>

Another curiosity is the relationship of this resolution to a supposed 'federal' relationship proposed by Lenin as a step towards the solution of the émigré problems, which would supposedly formalise a division of labour between Rabochee Delo, Iskra, Zaria and 'Struggle'.<sup>7</sup> At first sight, it seems hard to imagine why such an arrangement should require such a detailed and potentially divisive manifesto, which in reality could only have served as a barrier to common work and which subsequently only served as the pretext for a final and definitive split in the emigration. The most likely explanation is that Plekhanov and Lenin, as usual, disagreed with one another over the policy towards Rabochee Delo, with Plekhanov taking a harder line as previously. Lenin does not appear to have attended the Geneva meeting and, as such, it is possible that his concerns for building closer co-operation between the émigré circles fell by the wayside as Plekhanov tried to deal with Rabochee Delo using his own preferred methods. However, this does not easily explain why representatives of the newly formed 'Struggle' organisation, who also appear to have supported a 'federal' arrangement, should have tolerated such an obviously provocative stance by Plekhanov in relation to Rabochee Delo. One can only guess that they viewed whatever assent the latter gave to Plekhanov's statement as sincere and that further intervention was not necessary.

Regardless of these considerations, the general approval of the resolution brought about some kind of peace in the emigration for a period of about three months, along with a degree of optimism that final reunification would soon be possible. This factor seems to have discouraged Lenin from developing his polemic against Rabochee Delo for a whole period – in fact, he held off work on expounding the positions first outlined in 'Where To Begin?' until all hopes of such unity

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6 This possibility is suggested by an unusual source: the report of a police agent based in Paris regarding the activities of the émigré Social Democrats, which appears in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 1966, Vol. 62 pp. 142–50. Here it is stated that the supporters of *Rabochee Delo* once again planned to involve representatives of the organisations in Russia in the resolution of their differences with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and their followers, allowing them to choose either *Iskra* and *Rabochee Delo* as the central Party publication and to appoint a leadership to the new Foreign Committee of the RSDLP. Whilst it is fairly clear that, in reality, this projected meeting was eventually realised as the October 'Unification Conference', which had a much less ambitious agenda, and the accuracy of this police intelligence can be called into doubt, the account given seems to suggest that the 'Economists' were confident of receiving support of some Russian organisations, on the basis of which they could have hoped to overturn the resolution adopted at the June meeting in Geneva.

7 See, for example, Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 67–9.



*had been shattered at a second 'unity' congress in Zurich, which took place at the beginning of October.*<sup>8</sup>

*Following this disappointment, a new factional apparatus of previously unseen sophistication was developed to unite the supporters of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and Iskra in the emigration with the Iskra sympathisers active inside Russia. Together, these forces planned a campaign against Rabochee Delo directed mainly by Lenin.*<sup>9</sup> *There was therefore an unusually lengthy hiatus between the supposed 'first draft' of Lenin's What Is To Be Done? ('Where To Begin?') and the final version of the pamphlet, which eventually appeared in March 1902.*

## Resolution<sup>10</sup>

A conference of representatives from the Union of Russian Social Democrats, the organisation of *Iskra* abroad, *Zaria* and the Revolutionary Organisation 'Social-Democrat' notes that disagreements between these representatives on questions of principles and tactics, which would serve as an obstacle to joint work within the bounds of a common organisation, do not exist; that Russian<sup>11</sup> Social Democracy as a whole, despite partial disagreements, has always been based, and continues to be based, on the principles that were first formulated by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group; that the urgent interests of the Social-Democratic movement insistently demand the close unification of all Social-Democratic forces in Russia, and in particular the organisations of the émigré Social Democrats, a unification for which the Union of Social Democrats worked especially hard in its publishing and organisational activity, which constitutes its service to the Social-Democratic workers' movement and declares that the above-named organisations are uniting into an 'Émigré

8 Details of this meeting are discussed in the commentary to the next document in the collection.

9 This was the 'Russian *Iskra* Organisation', the founding Congress of which is described in Chapter 11.

10 This resolution was first printed in Martynov 1901, pp. 4–5.

11 Here *russkaia* not *rossiiskaia* is used: the Bund, though it apparently sent three observers to the meeting, does not appear to have been a formal participant.

Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Party', laying as the foundation of this agreement the following:

### Principled Agreement

- 1) Recognising the basic principles of scientific socialism and acting in solidarity with international revolutionary Social Democracy, we reject every attempt to introduce opportunism into the class struggle of the proletariat – attempts which are expressed in so-called 'Economism', Bernsteinianism, Millerandism<sup>12</sup> and so forth.
- 2) Declaring its solidarity with the *Manifesto* (1898) of the RSDLP and with the basic traditions of Russian Social Democracy, we recognise the overthrow of the autocracy as the most immediate political task of the working class in Russia, as the necessary precondition of its full social liberation.
- 3) The conditions of the historical development of Russia place before the RSDLP, which stands on the basis of the class movement of the proletariat, the task of leading the struggle with absolutism at the head of all the oppressed strata of the nation.
- 4) Into the sphere of activity of the Social Democracy enters: a) the leadership of all manifestations of proletarian struggle against all forms of political, economic and social persecution with the goal of converting the dissatisfaction and indignation of the working class into conscious struggle for a democratic republic and a socialist system; b) support for progressive movements directed against the present system in the interests of the development of the class and political consciousness of the proletariat and the struggle for democracy; c) the dissemination of the ideas of scientific socialism, the validation and development of socialist

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12 This refers to the ideas and practices of Alexandre Millerand (1859–1943), a French socialist parliamentarian who joined the French government of Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau in 1899. This was controversial, as the government was in no sense a coalition of the radical left so much as a government of republicans opposed to right-wing Catholic and restorationist trends in French society. Among its members was General Gaston de Galliffet (1830–1909), who had been instrumental in the suppression of the Paris Commune. Millerand's presence in such company was viewed by broad sections of the Social Democracy as a case of unprincipled careerism, but it was defended by figures such as Bernstein and Krichevskii as a novel tactical move designed to protect and extend the liberties enjoyed in the French Third Republic, a programme these figures viewed as being to the advantage of the working class.

theory and the ideological struggle with all opponents of revolutionary Marxism.

- 5) We recognise that, in our practical activity, the RSDLP should unswervingly be guided by the following *tactical propositions*: a) in all spheres of organisational-agitational activity, Social Democrats should not let slip from view, even for a minute, the most immediate political task of the Russian proletariat – the overthrow of the autocracy; b) aspiring towards the development of the political consciousness of the working class means agitation not only on the basis of the everyday struggle of hired labour with capital, but on the basis of the general position of the proletariat and the working masses in the state and society; c) not recognising that Social Democracy, in its agitation, can start to put forward general political demands only after passing through a preliminary stage of purely economic struggle and the struggle for partial political demands, we consider that the general content of Social-Democratic agitation should always be defined by the general socio-political situation of the working class and the basic positions of the Social-Democratic programme; d) recognising that in its relation to elementary forms of manifestations of the proletarian class movement, Social Democracy should be the force moving them forward, we consider criticism of tendencies which elevate elementary forms to the level of principles of socialist activity, along with criticism of the narrowness of these lower forms of the movement, to be important; e) in choosing methods of struggle with the contemporary regime, Social Democracy should be guided by considerations of political expediency and the correspondence of these methods of struggle with the need to preserve the class character of the movement.

## Boris Krichevskii, 'Principles, Tactics and Struggle', *Rabochee Delo* No. 10

*A second meeting, dedicated to the reunification of the Social-Democratic émigré circles, met in Zurich on 4–5 October 1901. This meeting was much larger than the Geneva event in June, drawing 33 attendees, the greater part of the entire Russian Social-Democratic emigration.<sup>1</sup> The 10th issue of Rabochee Delo had appeared just a few days before this meeting and contained two articles that directed broad criticism against Iskra and Zaria, consequently serving as a new obstacle to the reunification of the Social-Democratic emigration.*

*The first of these, 'Principles, Tactics and Struggle' was written by Krichevskii, one of the editors of the journal. This article takes as its starting point the notion of reuniting the emigration, whilst retaining the separate publications, and consequently at first sight it appears to be in keeping with the organisational remedy previously recommended by Lenin and 'Struggle'. Not only that, Krichevskii defends the need for complete agreement on principled and tactical questions as a precondition for the creation of a common émigré organisation, thus giving a hint as to why he supported the June resolution. He then claims that, even within such a developed statement of common ground, differences are possible of a type which could justify the existence of more than one literary centre, devoting the greater part of the article to an account of this special point of view, which would supposedly serve to justify the continued existence of Rabochee Delo in one form or another. In providing this account, he also directs a number of criticisms at material which appeared in Iskra and Zaria, supposedly to support his claim that differences existed between these publications and Rabochee Delo, despite their agreement on principled and tactical matters.*

*According to Krichevskii, Rabochee Delo's special point of view concerns the general, meta-theoretical relationship between Marxist 'principles' and 'tactics', the practical significance of which seems to be that sharp tactical 'turns' of the*

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<sup>1</sup> Sixteen of these were supporters of the Union Abroad, five of whom were also Bundists. The three members of 'Struggle' all attended, as did eight members of 'Social Democrat', included among whom were the three members of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group. Six further attendees were involved in *Iskra*, which once again tried to present a public image of detachment and 'neutrality' in relation to the émigré conflict, despite the participation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in its editorial decisions.

*type witnessed in Listok Rabocheho Dela No. 6 are entirely justified. He claims that Marxist tactics are the product of an interaction between 'principles,' which are viewed primarily as statements of how a future socialist society should look, and the 'concrete conditions and workers' demands' noted in the programme of Rabochee Delo. Whilst the former are entirely stable, the latter are always changing, and as a result, contrasting tactics and means can serve the same ends in different concrete situations. Not only that, because workers' consciousness can develop rapidly, the Party's change in tactics can at times be extremely sharp and unexpected.*

*Arguing in this way, Krichevskii does indeed appear to have identified a serious difference between his own thinking and that of his rivals in the emigration, not to mention the mainstream in Marxist thinking at the turn of the twentieth century. A cursory glance at the various programmatic statements of Marx and Engels, Plekhanov and the German Social Democrats<sup>2</sup> shows that, whilst they do indeed outline the main features of a socialist society, they also contain clear statements of belief as to the character of contemporary society and, indeed, of societies throughout history. For example, it is stated in The Communist Manifesto that all history has been the history of class struggle, and we are told in Plekhanov's Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group that the Russian village commune, rather than serving as the basis for a future socialism, is essentially the remnant of an obsolete form of society. It would appear that such statements also amount to matters of principle for the authors of these documents, and serve to help them interpret the 'concrete conditions' in which they find themselves, whereas Krichevskii, in an entirely idiosyncratic manner, views these 'concrete conditions' as something completely separate from 'principles'. One might say that his 'principles' are not so much a tool for interpreting the world, but an articulation of the 'final goal' of those struggling to change it.*

*On this basis, it could be said that Krichevskii and the allies of Plekhanov are speaking in somewhat different theoretical codes, the former leaning towards a utopian conception of socialism, for all his protestations that it is 'scientific' and therefore Marxist. For him, it seems there are no laws of economy or history which determine or limit in any way the transition to socialism, whereas Plekhanov always took great pains to argue that the backward character of Russia served as a significant barrier to the construction of socialism. Naturally, such an important difference throws open the question of what Krichevskii believed he had agreed to at Geneva and its relation to what the allies of the 'Emancipation of*

2 Specifically: Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, pp. 477–519 and Vol. 24, pp. 75–99; Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 2, pp. 357–62 and pp. 400–5; *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Partietages der Sotsialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* 1891, pp. 3–6.

*Labour' group thought they had agreed to. Specifically, it seems that Krichevskii, whilst feeling that his own views could be reconciled with the letter of what was presented to him in June, did not feel obliged to point out that he viewed certain words (specifically the term 'scientific socialism') in a quite different sense from that intended by the author of the resolution. It is hard to believe that Krichevskii was not aware of this problem at the time, and the fact that he did not mention it or, realising that any theoretical resolution based on such a serious misunderstanding would be meaningless, propose a more effective means of bringing the various sides together, does not reflect well on him.*

*Krichevskii develops his article with a rather vaguely-worded attack on the idea of a general revolutionary strategy ('tactics-as-plan'), which draws attention to the problem that some strategies can be too inflexible and can fail to connect with working-class consciousness. He attempts to apply this criticism to Lenin in particular, but this attack seems to rely rather too strongly on an idiosyncratic interpretation of a few phrases from the article 'Where To Begin?', an interpretation which is not supported by a rich supply of factual examples. This rhetorical weakness aside, Krichevskii's attack on the concept of 'tactics-as-plan' seems to imply a rejection of the tactical provisions of the June agreement, particularly the statements that the overthrow of the autocracy is the most immediate political task of the Russian working class, that the workers can lead other classes in the battle for democracy, that a preliminary 'economic' phase of agitation is unnecessary, and so forth. Taken together, these appear to describe a fixed political strategy in an unambiguous manner.*

*The article takes certain steps to apply this unique doctrine of tactics to the concrete cases of terrorism (assassinations) and the armed resistance of demonstrators to the police, but fails to draw concrete conclusions. It merely points out that, with the change of circumstances, previous tactical positions such as the opposition to assassination attempts should be reviewed. Indeed, in preference to taking concrete positions of his own on these issues, Krichevskii is rather more devoted to spying what he believes to be contradictory statements concerning them in the columns of Iskra, a procedure which may have reflected a desire to provoke further debate on tactical issues, but which in general fails to convince. Iskra's opposition to assassinations was not significantly shaken by the reappearance of the tactic in the revolutionary movement during February 1901, and most of the statements which appear to contradict this are in fact a mere reporting of the mood of different elements who took part in demonstrations. Krichevskii does not therefore seem to distinguish between the views of Iskra-Zaria and sections of the demonstrating public, who had no connection whatsoever with these publications on the question of terrorism.*

As regards workers fighting back against the police on demonstrations, the *Iskra* Editorial Board clearly did respond to such efforts with warm sympathy where they had actually taken place, whilst evidently regarding incitement to such measures by émigrés to be inappropriate.<sup>3</sup> It seems that, in its view, *Iskra* supporters active inside Russia had a greater right to issue tactical guidance on this question based on their greater familiarity with local circumstances and, in many cases, their actual participation in the incidents concerned. Thus, for all Krichevskii's attempts to spot contradictions, there is no important inconsistency between Lenin's scathing attitude to the violent rhetoric of 'A Historic Turn' in the article 'Where To Begin' and his sympathetic words for workers who fought back against troops in articles such as 'Another Massacre'.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of these considerations, Krichevskii draws the conclusion that émigré intellectuals should not exercise any influence on the tactical or organisational choices of the revolutionary movement inside Russia, a position which again seems inconsistent with the June agreement, in which numerous tactical propositions are, of course, outlined. His conclusion here seems noteworthy given the debt owed to them by later Menshevik critics of Lenin, criticisms which appear to have been rehearsed in numerous histories of this period currently in circulation.<sup>5</sup> Krichevskii argues that the plan of rebuilding the RSDLP by means of an 'all-Russian political newspaper' supported by a network of 'agents' inside Russia – a plan which was outlined by Lenin in 'Where To Begin?' – proposed the creation of a 'sect' condemned to be utterly detached from the real revolutionary movement rather than a genuine Social-Democratic Party. This is because the 'agents' would bypass the official, established organs of the Party, just as *Iskra* itself, which at this stage had no official status in the RSDLP and was thus accountable to nobody, appeared to be gradually usurping the role of central Party newspaper.

Lenin replied to this article at length in *What Is To Be Done?*, focusing in particular on the statements in its final section in defence of 'freedom of criticism'

3 One example of *Iskra*'s sympathetic attitude to this type of activity is to be found in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 25–30, where the violence evidently takes place on the initiative of the workers themselves. At the same time – as Krichevskii points out – the 'feuilleton' article in *Iskra* No. 4 ('*Voprosy Dnia*') appears to criticise the Union Abroad for trying to incite such activity in articles such as 'A Historic Turn'.

4 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 13–30.

5 See, for example, Dan 1964, pp. 241–5 and Trotsky 1999. In the latter, Trotsky coins the notorious term 'substitutionism' to describe Lenin's organisational thinking. See also: Keep 1966, pp. 89–95; Service 1985, p. 90; Service 2002, pp. 140–2 and Wolfe 1948, pp. 163–6, all of whom draw conclusions that Lenin's organisational thinking was authoritarian, elitist or anti-worker, seemingly on the basis of the arguments put forward by Krichevskii, Dan and Trotsky.



*in the Party and the statement that the Bernsteinian trend had a social basis in the proletariat, as opposed to a petty-bourgeois 'academic' strata in the labour movement.<sup>6</sup> He also defended the central role of the newspaper and its agents in the organisation of the revolutionary Party at some length.<sup>7</sup> However he did not submit the article to a thoroughgoing analysis in this pamphlet and, reading Krichevskii's efforts, it is perhaps easy to sympathise with this oversight. Krichevskii's polemic is at times unfocused, raising a variety of not well-connected issues regarding Iskra and Zaria, and he seems to show little consistency as a political thinker. Many of his more provocative criticisms seem to be based on a fairly shallow reading of individual phrases to be found within the pages of Plekhanovite publications, phrases which are removed from their proper context and needlessly presented as 'contradictory'. Moreover, as with many of the polemics later directed against Lenin by Martov and his allies,<sup>8</sup> so many of the allegations directed against Iskra and Zaria are not really supported with sound evidence, and the meanings of the basic concepts of the piece ('tactics-as-plan', 'tactics-as-process') remain ambiguous. For all these reasons, attempts to evaluate the article as a statement of political theory can prove to be a remarkably frustrating experience.*

## Principles, Tactics and Struggle

*BN Krichevskii*

The February and March events, aside from other tasks, place before Russian Social Democrats, and bring to the forefront, the task of creating a powerful fighting organisation of all our Party forces. In *Rabochee Delo* we have already more than once, well before the recent events, indicated this task to the comrades working in Russia, but its urgency only filtered into general consciousness once a spontaneous explosion of the revolutionary force accumulating in Russia had exposed the organised revolutionaries as under-prepared for the utilisation of the elemental forces which are now in motion.

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6 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 356–60.

7 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 492–516.

8 See Chapters 18 to 22 of the present collection.

A strong fighting organisation of the Social-Democratic Party demands first of all the creation of firm connections between the existing committees and groups, organised links which are based on unity in both principles and tactics and which are tangibly expressed in the election by the Party of a Central Committee and the recognition by it of a central press organ or press organs. But firm links should be established not only between Social Democrats active in Russia, but also between émigré Social-Democratic organisations which, as is well-known, have acquired a greater and greater significance for a movement constrained by tsarist chains in our homeland. And for émigré Social-Democratic organisations, the more responsible their role, the more obligatory unification and the more unforgivable their feud becomes in view of the sharpening revolutionary struggle in Russia.

In the current year, Russian Social-Democratic literature has been enriched by two very valuable publications: *Iskra* and the journal *Zaria*,<sup>9</sup> publications which, according to the announcement of the first, 'are entirely in solidarity in their views on the principled and tactical questions of Russian Social Democracy'. During their brief existence, both these publications have succeeded in making sharp attacks on *Rabochee Delo*. Fortunately, at the present moment we have the opportunity of speaking about these attacks in connection with the question of the unification of the émigré Social Democrats. This fact excuses us of the need for answering them in accordance with the proverb: 'the shout defines the echo' and of reacting with a 'polemical beauty' which is least of all capable of explaining the truth.

The aim of the present article is not polemical; it is to clarify the question of what separates us from *Iskra* and *Zaria* and whether this prevents us from collaborative work within the bounds of one organisation. In the interests of *firm* unity, these questions should be clarified in print.

# 1

We will start at the beginning, with the establishment of those boundaries which are essential if work is to be unified.

Generally speaking, work with one *Party* organisation demands agreement as regards programmatic principles. The combined work of organisations such as the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, the organisations of *Iskra* and *Zaria* and the Revolutionary Organisation 'Social Democrat', demands

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9 Up to now, six issues of *Iskra* have appeared (December 1900–July 1901) and one issue of *Zaria* (April 1901, Stuttgart) [Krichevskii's footnote].

more and has literary publication as its task, which of necessity acquires to a greater or lesser degree a *guiding* significance for the organisations active in Russia. So that these organisations can act in harmony within the framework of one general organisation, agreement on the most immediate *tactical goals* of the Social-Democratic movement and the most important means for their being obtained is necessary. On the other hand, we do not need that *uniform* attitude to all questions which are necessary for the Editorial Board of one publication.

The Russian Social Democracy has already developed so much that its initial uniformity of thought is no longer possible. Disagreements over separate points of a common theory and on individual practical questions represent not only a sign of the growth of the Party; they also facilitate its further growth. The different shoots growing from a common bulb acquire individual physiognomies. And the general interests of the Party demand not the destruction of the individual shades of opinion of various groups but, on the contrary, their free development.

For us, the unification of the émigré Social Democrats does not amount to depriving the organisations being united of their individual identity. The only thing that is important is that the disagreements between them do not cross the boundaries indicated above. We will see what these individual shades consist of, in our view, shades which, whilst requiring the necessary and desirable preservation of a certain independence on the part of the different publications, do not in the least prevent joint work within the framework of a common organisation.

A question now comes to the forefront: *what is the correct and normal relation between principles and tactics, and what should properly be understood by the term 'tactics'?*

The question is both old and eternally new, especially for a young Party which, despite the experience of the more advanced countries, cannot simply poach ready-made solutions, but must *work them out using its own experience* under given concrete conditions. Perhaps the most important issue between us and other Social-Democratic organisations is our opinion on precisely this question.

Since the time when socialism merged with the workers' movement, since the time when Social Democracy emerged as the class-political organisation of the proletariat, programmatic principles and tactics have been divided little by little into two separate categories in the consciousness of socialists. In the earlier period of isolated utopian socialism of different types and the spontaneous workers movement, this differentiation naturally did not exist. For the former, the achievement of ultimate goals would not take place through a *process of*

*struggle* completed according to known social laws under given social conditions, but through *sudden action*, either as a result of the good will of the ruling class or (among the 'spontaneous' socialism of the worker Utopians and old *Blanquists*) a successful uprising or conspiracy. Wherever there is no process of struggle and no fighting class, there can be no tactics in the real and the broad sense of the word, in the sense of adapting all activity to concrete conditions in the interests of obtaining an ultimate goal, in the sense of working-out new forms of struggle that correspond to the growth of the fighting class and its final goal. Where all struggle is concentrated on one final *act*, one can really only speak of tactics in the narrow sense of the *methods* and means for carrying out this act: *principles absorb tactics*. On the other hand, the spontaneous workers' movement and even the syndicalist movement, who are conscious, though isolated from socialism (the English labour unions) – trust their luck, being guided from day to day only by tangible conditions needed to attain the most petty, immediate goals, lacking a conscious ultimate goal and a programme in the proper sense of the word; they ceaselessly and unconsciously sacrifice the firm and general successes of the future to the ephemeral and partial successes of the present day: *their tactics absorb principles*.

We take these two extreme cases in a somewhat sharpened form to give a more distinct impression of our idea. At present it is impossible to find one or the other extreme in the ranks of international Social Democracy.<sup>10</sup> Despite all the disagreements connected with the name of Bernstein, there are no elements in it which would identify tactics with principles, or would deduce tactics from principles alone, just as on the contrary there are no supporters of those views which state that tactics should be decided only by concrete conditions, without any connection to principles. The notorious 'winged phrase' of Bernstein, 'the movement is everything, the ultimate goal, nothing' can no more be taken seriously, it no more defines the real views of Bernstein and the Bernsteinians than the opposite formula thrown about in the dust of polemic – 'the movement is nothing, the final goal is everything' can be said to define the opinions of the extreme left of the German Social Democracy on the mutual relation between tactics and principles. *Lieb knecht* correctly defines the dominant opinion on this account with the formula: '*movement towards the final goal*'.

10 Anarchists who deny the programme-minimum, the fight for reforms within the framework of the existing system and the political struggle in connection with it, can here be considered the successors or, more accurately, *throwbacks* of spontaneous workers' socialism [Krichevskii's footnote].

We would formulate the very same view thus: correct *tactics are the result of the interaction between principles which indicate the goal of the movement and the concrete conditions in which the movement takes place*. In other words, the activity of the Party should be defined by the *permanent* and, in one sense, an *abstract* element of principles on the one hand and the *changeable* and *concrete* element of the surrounding conditions on the other.

The reader will understand that we refer to tactics here as *the guiding spirit* of activity, its *philosophy* so to speak, in distinction from *activity itself*, from tactics in the sense of *the general character* of practical activity and all the more from tactics as *technique*, from specific methods and means of activity. In general, much confusion is introduced into arguments about tactics and into practical activity itself through the mixing up of these very different meanings of the word 'tactics'. The concept of tactics, which has been broadened out to the scale of a historical-philosophical scheme of activity – more precisely the process of struggle, given that it almost corresponds with programmatic principles or passes over the border separating the sphere of tactics from the sphere of principles – has also been narrowed to elementary technical methods of activity. This stipulation will come into use from now on.

In the programme of *Rabochee Delo* formulated by us, our view on the philosophical basis of tactics is expressed in the following position: 'This activity (of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad) can be worthwhile only on the condition that it, firstly, is guided not only by the general principles of scientific socialism, but also by the concrete relations of the social classes in Russia and the daily requirements of the Russian labour movement at its current level of development ...'.

How do *Iskra* and *Zaria* view this question? Do they agree with us or not? To our surprise – *yes and no!*

In Riazanov's<sup>11</sup> article, 'Notes on the Programme of *Rabochee Delo*',<sup>12</sup> the place in our programme just cited is criticised as one of the most harmful displays of eclecticism:

11 David Borisovich Riazanov (1870–1938) was the future Soviet academician, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, publisher of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology*. At this stage he was a member of a three-member group of émigré Social Democrats based in Paris, which had been created with the aim of reunifying the RSDLP émigrés into a common organisation and later took on the name 'Struggle'. See the commentary to Chapter 8 for further details of this group and Chapter 16, footnote 65 for further details about Riazanov's political activity.

12 Riazanov 1901. This article amounts to a line-by-line criticism of *Rabochee Delo*'s programme, the first document in the present collection. In it, Riazanov argues that *Rabochee Delo* represents an 'eclectic' trend that wavers between the 'economic' and 'political'

What sense is there in the phrase 'not only, but also'? Is not scientific socialism really distinguished from the non-scientific precisely by the fact that it is always...guided by the 'concrete relations of the social classes'? Does not scientific socialism really insist on the unceasing study of reality?

Riazanov then accuses the eclectic turn of phrase, 'not only but also', of wishing to avoid the accusations of 'abstractness' and 'doctrinaire-ism' raining down from the Populists and, in the most recent period, from Social-Democratic 'practicals', on 'a certain former programme' and especially on the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, and with wishing:

to juxtapose 'living', 'concrete', 'urgent' activity which is responsive to public demand against a programme of doctrinaires, of 'deadened theoreticians' who do not want to know anything but the principles of scientific socialism. This wish is very laudable, but the juxtaposition of scientific socialism and 'the concrete relations of the social classes' alone shows that the Editorial Board has still not made sense of the 'principles of scientific socialism. (*Zaria*, pp. 119–20)

The Editorial Board of *Zaria* accommodated Riazanov's article without any kind of reservation, not introducing any caveat to the cited words either – of course it too, along with Riazanov, accuses the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* of an insufficient understanding of scientific socialism. But it turns out that the very same accusation made by Riazanov should also be directed against the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. In the leading article of *Iskra* No. 2,<sup>13</sup> this is what we read:

The most important and most irreplaceable lesson handed to us by the history of Western-European socialism consists in the fact that in *any given country the most immediate tactic and task of the workers' Party is defined by the real social relations of this country. To forget these relations*

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trends in Social Democracy, whilst revealing a distinct bias in favour of the former over the latter. He then argues that Plekhanov's programmatic writings should form the starting point for a new Russian Social-Democratic programme.

- 13 This was the article, '*Na poroge dvatsatogo veka*' ('At the Threshold of the Twentieth Century'), which was written by Plekhanov and later republished in: Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 62–6.

*which guide the general position of socialism*<sup>14</sup> means to abandon the foundation of reality. (Our italics).

In this extract from *Iskra*, we do not find the eclectic words ‘not only but also’, but in it those ‘eclectic’ thoughts, that very same view of the philosophy of tactics that are in the programme of *Rabochee Delo* are expressed *much more sharply*.

Thus, on this question *Zaria* breaks with us whilst *Iskra* attempts a *rap-prochement*, despite their ‘full solidarity in their views on the theoretical and tactical questions of Russian Social Democracy’. But this is nothing: taken separately, each of these publications both agrees and disagrees with us.

We will start with *Zaria*. In the very first issue, where we find Riazanov’s article, Molotov<sup>15</sup> writes about the question which interests us here in the article,

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14 Incidentally, *Zaria* considered it possible to print Riazanov’s quibble over the words of our programme: ‘acting on the basis of international socialism’. ‘It is unclear’, complains Riazanov, as there is, allegedly, ‘“international” socialism of various types which have nothing in common with the teachings of Marx’ (*Zaria*, p. 119). The author of the leading article in *Iskra* No. 2 commits an even greater ‘vagueness’ than us; he speaks simply of ‘the general position of socialism’, not having clarified to the reader or to Riazanov precisely what socialism he had in mind. Does Riazanov point out the terrible fact that there is national, and even nationalistic socialism? We dwell on this quibble because it is characteristic of the theoretical scope of Riazanov’s ‘Notes’. In view of this, we consider it superfluous to reply to the ‘Notes’ with a special article. The genuinely important questions that are *touched upon* there will be analysed and dealt with by us at an appropriate time with great benefit to our cause, without involvement in the fault-finding and petty polemic of Riazanov.

We consider it necessary only to note that Riazanov (*Zaria*, p. 131n) allows himself to suspect that the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* distorted the idea of the phrase ‘with the help of strikes alone we will *perhaps* never attain the necessary improvements in political conditions in Russia’ in an underhand manner (so to speak), through its introduction of the word ‘perhaps’ into (Martov’s) pamphlet, *The Workers Cause in Russia*, which was published by the Union. It is a great shame that the Editorial Board of *Zaria* permitted this conclusion to Riazanov: he had the chance to find out if the word ‘perhaps’ belonged to the author of the pamphlet. Will the Editorial Board find it necessary to correct this mistake in its next issue? [Krichevskii’s footnote].

15 ‘Molotov’ was Israel Lazarevich Gelfand (1867–1924), more commonly known by his pseudonym ‘Parvus’. Gelfand was a complex figure who, having left Russia to study in Switzerland, became a Marxist and became involved in the German Social Democracy. He was initially on the left of the Party and appears to have helped *Iskra* during the period in which it was based in Munich (January 1901–March 1902). In 1905 he was closely allied to Trotsky on the left of Menshevism, the two together developing the concept of ‘permanent revolution’, which appeared to challenge the traditional Russian Social-



'European Workers and their Russian Historian', which is directed against the Russian Bernsteinian Prokopovich (we note in passing that it is one of the best articles in *Zaria*):

To start with the difference between tactics and principles. *Tactics are adapted to circumstances*. Mr Prokopovich wisely concludes from this that principles are to be cut away like a superfluous chunk. Nothing of the sort! *Tactics, being adapted to circumstances which change by the day, all the same lead to principles through practice itself*, proving the validity of the general starting point. How is this to be explained to you, Mr. Prokopovich? If you go from St. Petersburg to Vyborg by foot, then you need to head north-west. This is a principle which gives a direction. But on the road you meet numerous obstacles: you have to go by the established road, as to crawl through the fence is not always possible; the road, perhaps, more than once inclines to one side; you have to climb up hills, to swim across rivers, to go round mires and meet heavy carts which will perhaps force you to turn a little more to the side. *We cannot know all this in advance, by looking at the starting and finishing points*: tactics are needed, which are adapted to circumstances. From this, are principles superfluous? Try to go in another direction and you will never arrive in Vyborg, or you will get there having gone round the entire globe. (All italics ours, pp. 224–5)

The reader will see a complete correspondence between the views of Molotov and our view of tactics as the result of the interaction between principles and concrete conditions, as the organic unity of the *permanent* and relatively abstract element of principles and the *changing* element of concrete conditions ('circumstances which change *daily*', to use the salient expression of Molotov.)

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Democratic schema of two distinct revolutions: the first democratic, the second socialist. However, he later drifted into a quite ambiguous position, becoming a successful business tycoon, his schemes apparently having started out as means of raising funds for the Social Democracy. During World War I he came to an understanding with the German government, who would support his efforts to promote revolution in Russia. When these relations were discovered, his reputation among revolutionary Social Democrats suffered. Nonetheless, he was involved in efforts by the German authorities to transport anti-war revolutionaries from Switzerland to Russia in order to undermine the latter's war efforts. Lenin returned to Russia in this manner.

Thus, one article of *Zaria* enters closely into *rapprochement* with us, and the other sharply diverges from us. Molotov contradicts Riazanov, or the other way round.

It seems that the disagreement between the two contributors to *Zaria* on such an important question leads to contradictions between them on matters of detail as well. Thus Riazanov pronounces 'the main condition of revolutionary activity' to be 'lean as much as possible to the left' (p. 133), just as Molotov, the enemy of empty formulae, finds that it is harmful not only to 'lean to the right': he points to the fact that 'leaning to the left' (from tactics he calls 'practical-revolutionary', such as the ones dominant in the ranks of German Social Democracy) led to pure revolutionism which has now 'been reduced to nought' (p. 217).

Let us now look at *Iskra*. It too contradicts itself on this question, and in its editorial articles (unsigned) too. The reader knows that the view of *Iskra* on the *philosophical* basis of tactics corresponds with our views. But the instance cited above from the leading article in No. 2 could perhaps be interpreted by others only in the sense that Russian Social Democracy should, apart from 'the general position of socialism', remember the condition of the concretely-existing autocratic system in Russia and the necessity of its overthrow. Speaking in favour of this position, which is narrow to the point of comedy,<sup>16</sup> is what appears to be a continuation of the passage we have just cited. In agreement with our opinions on tactics, which naturally excludes the possibility of composing a plan of struggle in advance, in so far as tactics and of course the means of struggle should be adapted to changing circumstances, and in accordance with this view, we read in the leading article of *Iskra* No. 1: 'Finally, as regards questions of tactics, we limit ourselves here to the following: the Social Democracy does not tie its hands, *it does not narrow its activity with any plan or method of political struggle thought up in advance* (our italics) – it recognises all means of struggle, provided that they correspond to the forces of the Party and offer the possibility of attaining the best results obtainable under present conditions'.<sup>17</sup>

16 Comedy, because the 'recollection' by Russian Social Democrats of the overthrow of the autocracy does not need a *philosophical-tactical* consideration of the insufficiency of 'the general position of socialism' for a 'definition of the most immediate tasks and tactics'. Who on earth requires the basing of, say, the necessity of seafaring for travel to America in one or another theory of time and motion? [Krichevskii's footnote].

17 This was republished in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 366–71. See p. 371 for an alternative translation of the passage.

But in direct contradiction to itself, in the leading article of No. 4, *Iskra* categorically declares that: '*the term tactics is only deserved by systematic activity which is informed by firm principles and an unswervingly conducted plan of action...*' (our italics). What has now become of 'real social relations', which together with the general positions of socialism, define the 'immediate tasks and tactics of the Workers' Party' (*Iskra* No. 2)? What has become of the fear of 'tying one hands with some plan or other worked out in advance' (*Iskra* No. 1)? We will not begin to ask what became of the picturesque description of horizontal and vertical *zigzags* of tactics (in part, very *timid*), which Molotov gave in *Zaria*, and in what way these 'zigzags' of the April issue of *Zaria* were substituted for the 'systematic, unswervingly conducted plan' of the May number of *Iskra*...

True, in the lead article of No. 4, purely polemical considerations play a big role, and one is therefore led to think that the cited place represents not so much a revision of the opinions laid out by the Editorial Board in its programmatic article as much as a rash polemical passion. But we will see that, No. 4 aside, *Iskra* and *Zaria* include contradictory opinions as to the relations between tactics, principles and reality. Therefore we find it difficult to say with any certainty whether they agree with us in this matter or not.

This said, little work has been done on this question, and it now finds itself at the preliminary stage through which every question and opinion in general passes (especially in the sphere of social activity). For very many activists it still remains, so to speak, beyond the bounds, or on the threshold of consciousness, though it defines their practical activity. Similarly, people speak their native language for centuries before grammar appears and consciously establishes the rules of this language. In this way, a theory of knowledge appears after the human mind has managed to create, and to destroy, a whole row of philosophical systems. We will not even mention Molière's aristocratic bourgeois who spoke in prose for 40 years without knowing it...<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, *Iskra* and *Zaria* have still not established their opinions regarding the questions occupying us. However, in some of their more detailed opinions, as well as their attitudes to definite phenomena, it is possible to conclude that they stand much closer to Riazanov than to Molotov – to a dogmatic disregard for concrete conditions owing to a fear of deviating from principles. We, *precisely for the sake of principles*, consider it necessary to 'adapt tactics

18 Molière's play-ballet *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Molière 1671) satirises the ambitions of the social-climbing bourgeoisie and the snobbishness of the aristocracy. The reference is to Act ii, Scene iv: '*Par ma foi, il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose, sans que j'en susse rien*'.

to principles', not being afraid that the guardians of dogma might accuse us of 'unprincipled eclecticism' and 'lack of firmness'. *Iskra* and *Zaria*, in consequence of a reaction to a 'pragmatism' that is to a certain degree legitimate, incline towards the opposite extreme, to a baseless though 'systematic' plan. We ourselves think that we can and should revolutionise our movement whilst remaining true *'to the general spirit of Marxist teaching, according to which there is nothing more absurd than deriving the tasks of the socialist movement corresponding to the present moment from concepts'* (Kautsky, in his book against Bernstein, German original, p. 32).

In general, *Iskra* and *Zaria* visibly gravitate towards the view of tactics as a *plan of activity* which is worked out in advance and is unchangeable. Whereas we see in tactics *a process of the growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party*.

Naturally, *tactics-as-plan* can only be based on principles and the most general conditions of reality – Russia with the presence of the autocracy, for example. The seductive aspect of these tactics – their planned character and stability – actually blunts all intuition to reality, 'tying hands' and 'narrowing activity', to use those expressions of *Iskra* which it had forgotten about by its fourth issue. And in so far as concrete conditions, the actual road along which we have to travel to reach our goal, are not adapted to plans worked out in advance, one of two things remain: either to sacrifice living activity to the systematic plan, or to eternally waver between the obligations laid down in the plan and the activity which the conditions and interests of struggle imperatively demand. It is obvious that the people with the plan choose the latter outcome in practice: these days there are no Simeon-the-Stylites who take vows of immobility.<sup>19</sup> But their forced concessions to the demands of struggle, which are made despite the 'systematic' plan, sin by their half-heartedness and their habitual delay. Thus tactics-as-plan is not only not saved from wavering, but on the contrary makes these waverings really dangerous because they are without principle, being every time the result of a bargain with a principled conscience, a bargain which shakes faith in principles and which gives birth to hypocrisy.

Liebknicht, undoubtedly a man of firm principles, neatly characterised tactics-as-plan by comparing it with a military plan of the Austrian generals in the war against revolutionary France: these generals 'lost every battle because they were required to act in accordance with a celebrated plan worked out in advance by the Vienna *Oberkriegsrat* (the supreme Council of war), right down to the smallest detail. The plan was irreproachable in its own way but . . . it was not suited to the given place, the French generals were not sufficiently oblig-

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19 Simeon the Stylite was a Christian ascetic (circa 390–459) known for spending long periods alone on top of a pillar.

ing to conform to the assumptions of the Vienna *Ober-kriegsrat* and the battle was lost according to all the rules of the art' ... (From posthumous writings of Liebknecht, *Vorwärts* 7 August, 1901.)

*Tactics-as-process* has that great advantage of defining in advance not the means of activity themselves but only the *general principle which should guide the changes in our activity* – adapting it to current conditions for the sake of attaining goals indicated in the programme. These tactics are as far from opportunism and 'unprincipled eclecticism' as they are from that 'principled' immobility shown by the old woman who suffered from a mania for cleanliness, about whom Emile Vandervelde writes (see his article in *Rabochee Delo* No. 9).<sup>20</sup> It is the ripe fruit of a mature Social-Democratic movement. In contrast to the childish-sectarian period of the movement, which restricted activity with numberless bonds of 'abstinence', it writes: 'faith without action is death!' Emerging on the basis of struggle itself, the view of tactics as a *process* is the logical compliment to the general Marxist view of the whole workers' movement as a process of development of a proletariat which is fighting for its liberation. In practice, this opinion is expressed in the fact that the immediate task of the proletariat changes and is broadened together with the changing conditions of struggle and the growth of its power.

Tactics-as-process – it is the *eternal searching for new paths in the light of principles*, a search attended by mistakes, as is the case with every human search, and it is *the only one guaranteeing the continuous growth of the movement*. It has long since been known that those who make no mistakes make nothing. To dogmatists who mistake this search for 'wavering', we say, along with Lessing,<sup>21</sup> that it is infinitely better to strive towards the truth eternally than to possess the truth itself, something which is impossible for mortals. Besides, the general spirit of Marxism speaks against any dogmatic pride which imagines itself to be the monopoly owner of eternal truth: 'no doctrine is so far from the recognition of eternal truths as that of Marx himself', writes Kautsky. This relates, of course, not only to theoretical, but still more to practical truths.

20 Vandervelde 1901. This article presents the revisionist ideas Bernstein and the 'ministerialism' of Millerand as part of the broad church of international socialism and as tendencies which were present in it from the start. In the article, Vandervelde therefore criticises the split in French socialism between the reformist supporters of Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) and the revolutionary supporters of Jules Guesde (1845–1922), which soon led to the emergence of two rival socialist organisations in France.

21 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) was a German dramatist, critic and man of letters with pro-Enlightenment views.

What is right is found in struggle and in struggle the correct tactics are also found: '*the best judge of questions of tactics is success*', as Liebknecht loved to repeat.

## 2

What kind of changes in activity within the framework of our view on tactics can there be? First of all, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of change. There is no need to speak about small changes of methods and means of struggle, about *technical* changes. But there are also sharp changes which fundamentally change the whole tone and tempo of the movement, the whole character of struggle, because the circumstances of struggle have themselves changed. That which is good and expedient for the 'grey and peaceful' circumstances of everyday historical conditions is inappropriate and harmful for critical periods.

Therefore, in accordance with our basic view on tactics in the philosophical sense, we have called our Party, with the onset of the revolutionary period which was opened by the February and March events, to a '*fundamental change of tactics*' in the sense of a change in the general character of our activity:

Activity reckoning on a grey, peaceful situation, on a period characterised by the general collapse of the revolutionary spirit, on the slow, evolutionary growth of the consciousness of the working masses, on the systematic education of them, so to speak, on a journey from the simple to the complex, from the near to the further away – such activity would be a *fatal mistake* at a moment characterised by a rapid upsurge of revolutionary efforts, when every day, having brought active struggle against the autocracy, revolutionises the masses much more quickly than whole years of peaceful propaganda and agitation ('A Historic Turn', *Listok Rabochego Dela*, No. 6.)

*Iskra*, for its part, in the already mentioned polemical lead-article in its fourth issue, saw every possible sin in our sympathetic attitude to events: 'eclecticism without principle, imitating every new trend', 'the absence of any firm point of view', the changing of opinions as to 'whether fighting organisations and agitation among the masses<sup>22</sup> are always unconditionally needed' and so forth (the purely abusive expressions we leave out).

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<sup>22</sup> This accusation is the only one of those made by *Iskra* pretending to be of a factual character that is completely without foundation. Readers of *Rabochee Delo* well know that

Again, it is now hard to judge how much in these measureless attacks of *Iskra* is simply polemical fervour and how much is disagreement with us on essential matters. Whatever the case, it is clear that a greater or lesser share of disagreement lies at the basis of these attacks. Thus, the attitude of *Iskra* to the March events is one of the individual cases in which we will try to cast light on the degree of our general disagreement on the question of the relations of tactics to principles and to reality.

But before we set about this, we will point to the fact that a sharp change of the whole character of activity which corresponds to a change in the circumstances of struggle is not a fabrication of 'unprincipled eclecticism'. We can again refer to a writer whom *Iskra* does not accuse of eclecticism and pandering to trends. The thought which we expressed in 'A Historic Turn' concerning the adaptation to separate cases is substantiated by Kautsky, in his adaptation towards the mutual relations between economic and political forms of struggle, the relative significance of which, in turn, fell and rose in connection with 'the undulating movement of capitalist industry': in a period of prosperity, the development of economic organisations comes to the forefront along with social 'reforms', and

[At this point, two pages are missing from the copy of *Rabochee Delo* No. 10 held as part of the British Library's copy of the Houghton Collection]

of plans, efforts, skill and cunning. They did not reckon with the objective laws of social development and with the process of development of the class struggle. The doctrine of Marx and Engels once and for all put an end to conspiratorial opinions and methods of revolutionary struggle. The conscious work of revolutionary minds and social relations takes first place among Social Democrats and has nothing in common with the planned character of a conspiracy. The Social-Democratic revolutionary has a task – his conscious work only *speeds up* objective development; it does not abolish it or replace it with subjective plans. *Iskra* knows all this in theory. But the great significance that is justifiably attributed by Marxism to conscious revolutionary work captivates it in practice *thanks to its doctrinaire opinion on tactics, to its underestimation of the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development.*

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from the very beginning we not only called for political agitation, not waiting for the appearance of *Iskra*, but also provided the *only* Social-Democratic political-agitational material from abroad in our publications to comrades working in Russia. On the other hand, our publishing activity in reality prepared the tactical unity of the Party and with that, the possibility of a 'fighting organisation' and the Union did everything that an émigré organisation could to bring about such an organisation [Krichevskii's footnote].



We have already indicated that *tactics-as-plan* contradicts the basic spirit of Marxism. It is therefore unsurprising that *Iskra*, inclining towards *tactics-as-plan* as it does, is forced by this to approximate the conspiratorial opinion on the 'preparation' of revolution against its will, and to give second place to the objective or spontaneous process in the *final act* of revolutionary development.

Typically, the author of the leading article in No. 4,<sup>23</sup> where 'the systematic plan' was sketched out in detail (we will speak about the plan itself below), is forced to stipulate in conclusion that, speaking 'all the time only about a systematic, planned preparation', he 'does not in the least want to say that the autocracy will fall exclusively as a result of a regular siege or an organised storming. On the contrary, it is entirely possible, and historically much more likely, that the autocracy will fall under the impact of one of those spontaneous explosions...'. Probably for the first time, a *Social-Democratic* writer, a *Marxist*, has to admit that such a fundamental political crisis as the fall of the autocracy in Russia would not be '*exclusively*' the result of a subjective 'planned preparation', in other words he admits that the objective laws of social development would have no small significance for the preparation and triumph of the revolution. Probably for the first time, a *Marxist* has – and with sufficient justification – occasion to fear that 'misunderstanding' that he will be taken for a supporter of historical...idealism and subjectivism. By the way, in his admission, the author of the lead article admits only the 'full possibility' and 'much greater likelihood' of the fall of the autocracy from a 'spontaneous explosion' rather than political revolution conceived without 'a spontaneous explosion'...

It is possible to think that for the author, the revolutionary flame can flare up only from a *Spark* (with a capital 'S')<sup>24</sup> originating in the editorial laboratory of an 'all-Russian newspaper' and an 'unswervingly conducted plan', unconsciously recalling the prototype of lifeless doctrine – Goethe's Wagner with his laboratory homunculus.<sup>25</sup>

23 Lenin: the article is 'Where To Begin?' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 13–24).

24 There is something of a play on words here. *Iskra* was chosen as a name for the Lenin group's newspaper based on a remark originally made in a letter by the Decembrist poet Alexander Ivanovich Odoevskii (1802–39) to Pushkin: '*iz iskry vozgoritsia flama*' ('from a spark, a flame'). The expression reflected the belief (which can be interpreted in different ways) that the activities of small revolutionary organisations and conspiracies heralded great social revolts, and these words appeared on the masthead of the *Iskra* newspaper. Krichevskii's point is that the *Iskra*-ites rejected the idea that any 'spark' (*iskra*) other than their own newspaper could serve as the ignition to such mass revolts.

25 See Goethe's *Faust II*, Act ii. Dr. Wagner is Faust's assistant, whose recreation of a human being leads Faust and Mephistopheles back in time to Hellenic antiquity, where they have various adventures (Goethe 1998).

Without doubt, the consciousness of combatants plays an ever greater role in history. The most important laws of social development were discovered by Marx and Engels. Scientific socialism is justifiably called 'the algebra of revolution'. Social Democracy is, and can only be, the *conscious* movement of a proletariat fighting for its liberation. No other class has had such a clear idea of the conditions for its own liberation, that final goal of its struggle, and of the paths that lead to it as the proletariat fighting under the banner of Social Democracy. All this is true. But scientific socialism would stop being itself if it discarded from the accounts-book of history, or even underestimated the significance of the spontaneous element – not only in the evolutionary period (this is obvious) but also in the revolutionary period. Just as people, despite all the successes of the natural sciences, will multiply using Grandad's old method, so too will the appearance of a new social order, despite all the successes of the social sciences and the growth of conscious fighters, prove to be the result of *predominantly* spontaneous explosions. This relates *even* to the social revolution in the West, where the proletariat can throw hitherto unheard of forces of consciousness and organisation onto the scales of history. The spontaneous element should predominate to a much greater degree in the approaching Russian political revolution.

Of course, we entirely agree with *Iskra* that 'no political Party can, without falling into adventurism, build its activity by reckoning on such (spontaneous) explosions';<sup>26</sup> but *every revolutionary Party is obliged at the moment of spontaneous explosions to assist them with all their efforts so that the explosion leads to revolution and to victory*. *Iskra*, for the reasons indicated, because of its doctrinaire cast of mind, forgot about this responsibility and considered it possible to curse with inky thunderbolts those who remembered this obligation and carried it out to the extent their forces permitted.

### 3

We will now look at disagreements on several individual points which have been revealed between ourselves and *Iskra* in connection with the March events.

From the point of view of the *means of struggle*, two facts stand out against the background of revolutionary events: street demonstrations and the shooting by Karpovich. A demonstration at a *revolutionary* moment has a completely different significance to one taking place during peaceful times.

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<sup>26</sup> This, incidentally, would not lead to adventurism, but to quietism, to doing nothing in the expectation of a spontaneous explosion [Krichevskii's footnote].

In the latter case it is a powerful means of *agitation*, an indicator of the forces acquired, a method of tempering the courage of the combatants, the best means of enlisting new forces and a *protest* against the existing system; at a revolutionary moment it is first of all a *violent threat* with the aim of scaring the government and of making it capitulate, a threat *which should be carried out without fail* if the government sets forces in motion instead of yielding to the threat of violence. *Answering violence with violence*, which is not always possible and sometimes, perhaps, even undesirable in peaceful times and in the case of purely local demonstrations, was *obligatory* at the moment Russia was passing through in February and March. Otherwise, the first revolutionary violent threat can be directly reduced to nothing by the actual violence of the government – and a *revolutionary* demonstration, having the goal of *immediate* pressure on the government, would at best be turned into a purely *agitational* demonstration or a street *protest* which, in the worst case, can have a negative result: *the beating up* of undefended demonstrators can scare the crowd and demoralise it and take away from it every inclination to repeat the threat of violence which proves to be *illusory* and therefore *harmful*.

Such considerations, which in connection with the special significance of events naturally prompted our proclamation, 'To All Workers In Russia', (published in March),<sup>27</sup> call for 'the answering of violence with violence'. *Iskra* saw in this call nothing but 'light-mindedness'! In the feuilleton of its fourth issue, it speaks in favour of 'extreme caution' in relation to demonstrations, precisely at that time when demonstrations had sprung up regardless of any 'calls' and when popular spontaneity had burst its fetters, when the government seemed to have been paralysed by the force and scale of the spontaneous explosion!... It is as if *Iskra* does not see this explosion and does not qualitatively distinguish the moment from any peaceful time: more precisely, it is distinguished only by the fact that 'our enemies have organised themselves and are ready for us'!... Plain common sense speaks in favour of the *perennially* well-organised and readied forces of the government being disorganised and paralysed right at the moment of the popular explosion – this was to a certain degree revealed in reality during March and February. But *Iskra*, which is entirely absorbed with the idea of the premature character and, so to speak, the imposture of the revolutionary explosion, which was not the result of 'planned preparation' – considers it necessary to cool the ardour of the fighters and 'extremely cautiously' counsels the sparing of strength until that longed-awaited time when... clearly, when our forces are strongly organised and the forces of the government disorganised and unready...

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27 This proclamation has not been located.

'Extremely cautious' in the matter of demonstrations, the feuilleton in the fourth issue reveals doctrinaire blindness to living facts which are not packaged into habitual formulae. It is beyond doubt that the 'historic turn' caught off guard the doctrinaire elements of Social Democracy, who were so firmly convinced that the Social-Democratic movement of recent years was a complete mistake and had 'heretically' put revolutionary work into reverse. From this came *an undervaluing* of past Social-Democratic work and its influence on the very appearance of the turn; from this came doubt as to the very possibility of active intervention in events on the part of existing Social-Democratic organisations; from this, finally, came too an insipid, half-pessimistic attitude to the events themselves, which in part, however, is also explained by a doctrinaire underestimation of the significance of the spontaneous element.

Doctrinaire blindness or doctrinaire timidity also explains the attitude of *Iskra* to the exploits of Karpovich. You will search in vain in it for even one word of sympathy for this heroic act or a word of actual *evaluation* of it in connection with events. In the chronicle of the third issue,<sup>28</sup> *Iskra* only acknowledges that 'everybody sympathised with Karpovich'. Then, in the feuilleton of the fourth issue, when citing our words from 'A Historic Turn' concerning the sympathy '*of all revolutionary elements*' with Karpovich and Lagovskii, *Iskra* inserted a question mark after the word 'all'! In the third (April) issue, '*everybody*' sympathised with Karpovich – note: all people, all mortals in general, but in the fourth (May), even the general sympathy of the revolutionary elements alone is already subject to doubt. However, in the same feuilleton of No. 4, 'the joyful feeling with which *many* (only 'many'!) revolutionary and opposition elements met the shot of Karpovich' is directly mentioned.

Where does this strange relation to the act of heroic *initiative*, which gave such a strong push to further events, come from?<sup>29</sup> Before everything else, *Iskra* saw a danger for ... Social-Democratic tactics in the shot of Karpovich: 'we should fight that disorganisation of revolutionary forces to which the new upsurge of terrorist moods threatens to lead us' (feuilleton, fourth issue).<sup>30</sup>

28 These words are actually found in the section '*Iz nashei obshchestvennoi zhizni*' ('From Our Public Life'), which gives a series of detailed and lengthy reports on the student-inspired demonstrations of February and March 1901. A different section of the paper is entitled '*Khronika rabochego dvizheniia*' ('Chronicle of the Labour Movement'), which provided similar reports of specifically working-class struggles.

29 In a new self-contradiction in the same fourth issue, *Iskra* places the shooting alongside street demonstrations in terms of its *practical* results. True, it is limited with the cursory remark: 'After the shot of Karpovich and street demonstrations, the government began to talk with the students once again' [Krichevskii's footnote].

30 The translator has not been able to locate these words in the cited article.

We think that the tasks of Social Democracy cannot and should not counteract 'the upsurge of terrorist moods', which would lead our Party to a series of dangerous mistakes and which would threaten to put it in a false position . . .

However, now is not the place to talk about terror in substance. We note only that the attack of *Iskra*, which tries to provoke the impression that we are in favour of terror, is the fruit of a profound misunderstanding. In 'A Historic Turn', in this call to arms, we only invited our Party organisation to a *unanimous* resolution as regards the 'inevitable', in our opinion, emerging Red Terror, terror which had emerged without the knowledge and the participation of Social Democrats: 'our Party organisations cannot and should not ignore this fact (the necessity of a red terror in response to a white one) or avoid it with silence. They should *jointly* decide what position they are to take *together* in relation to terror'.

Yes, we – in contrast to *Iskra* – considered our responsibility not to be one of counteracting terrorist moods but of warning our Party organisations against ignoring the facts of terrorism and against a possible *split* on the question of terror once this method of struggle found fertile ground.

We will readily acknowledge that, in consequence of us inviting our Party organisations to take a unanimous position in relation to terror, we were thinking of expressing our view as to what our position should be: specifically, we were thinking of inviting our organisations to publish sympathetic proclamations and to organise sympathetic demonstrations where terrorist acts took place. In other words, in contradiction to *Iskra*, we considered it necessary to utilise those acts of struggle which, for one or another reason, are carried out separately from Social Democracy for revolutionary goals. But we did not express that opinion in this *call to arms* only because it seemed out of place to make such a concrete call from abroad in relation to this question.<sup>31</sup>

The feuilleton in the fourth issue gives us one more extremely characteristic example of *Iskra*'s doctrinaire attitude. It laughs maliciously at the fact that the Editorial Board of *Rabochee Delo* speaks about terror as a 'completely new question'. Leaving on one side the polemical after-taste of this laughter, we will note that *Iskra* clearly does not allow any other conception of a *question* or *task* than a purely *theoretical* one. Given that, at the start of the 1880s, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, and several Social-Democratic circles at the beginning of the 1890s, 'decided' the question of terror in pamphlets or conversations, this question has of course been decided *practically* for the Social-

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31 Since this time, the Fourth Congress of the Bund has come out with a sympathetic proclamation: 'In the case of the repetition of terrorist acts, they should be used for the development of political consciousness by means of proclamations'. [Krichevskii's footnote].

Democratic *organisations* that have developed since that time, which have acted under totally different conditions from those circles of the early 1890s. It is as if *Iskra* does not understand this difference at all! Here, doctrinaire opinions on tactics and disregard for concrete conditions of struggle is taken to an extreme, to the plainly improbable pretence of foisting the 'resolution' of a tactical question given by a group of émigré writers more than 15 years ago onto the Party-organisation, even though there was no trace of the Party when this matter was 'resolved'.<sup>32</sup>

## 4

The reader will recall how we defined our disagreement with *Iskra* on the question of the philosophical foundations of tactics. From it, not only a different attitude towards *the history of our movement* but – and this is much more important – *different evaluations of its competence in the present* are unavoidably drawn, more precisely, disagreements of opinions as to what should *take priority* in the deciding of tactical questions: the opinion of theorists or the practical experience of struggle.

We continue to support the idea expressed by Marx: '*jeder Schritt wirklicher Bewegung ist wichtiger als ein Dutzend Programme*' ('every step of the real movement is more important than a dozen programmes'.) And if programmatic principles indicate the *goal* of the movement to us, then the very *possibility* of the movement is determined by practical struggle alone. The correct tactics are found in struggle and the 'the best judge in terms of tactics is success'. Therefore, we cannot consider a tactical question 'resolved' on the mere basis that theoreticians resolved it, even though they are geniuses 'armed with all the knowledge of their century'.

We do not just understand the *deciding* of tactical questions in a manner different from *Iskra*, but also *what a question or task is* from the point of view of tactics. For us, a tactical task begins its existence only when it becomes a priority during the actual course of struggle. Until that time, the – task is

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32 Incidentally, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group itself gave not one decision, but at least *two different decisions* on the question of terror. The first decision, in accordance with the terrorist practice of 'People's Will' '*recognises the necessity of the terrorist struggle against the absolute government*' ... (*Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group*, Geneva, 1884). The second decision, given in the *Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democrats* of 1885 only spoke of 'so-called terrorist activity' *at the moment of the 'decisive attack'* on the autocracy [Krichevskii's footnote].

programmatic, theoretical, historical, whatever you like, only it is not a *task of struggle*, it is not a task for the realisation of which the surrounding conditions or the Party's own forces have ripened. Such a view is, incidentally, only the partial adaptation to the Party's struggle of one of Marx's most profound philosophical-historical positions: 'Humanity only sets itself tasks which it can carry out, for a careful examination shows that the task itself only emerges when the material conditions for its resolution exist, or at very least are in the process of emerging'.<sup>33</sup> Like humanity as a whole, the Social-Democratic Party, which in our epoch represents the forward movement of humanity, puts in the framework of its great programme, the historic task of which is the realisation of socialism, one tactical task after another, in accordance with the sequential emergence of the 'material conditions for the resolution' of the task. The experience of the advanced countries is undoubtedly a great advantage to backward countries, the late and unsatisfactory caress of history, their stepmother. But not a single backward country can 'jump over the natural phases of development' (Marx) on the basis of the experience of the more advanced countries. Only historical idealism considers it possible for them to replace their own development with foreign experience, or an objective process with subjective reflection. Thus the revolutionary Populists of the 1870s, with their idealistic understanding of history, were able to place hopes in an immediate passage of Russia from the village commune to socialism. All this is applicable to the development of a Party and to the Russian Social-Democratic Party in particular. Foreign experience illuminates its goal and the direction of the road, but the road itself can only be found by the Party itself in the process of its struggle. The tactical tasks, decided by the parties of the advanced countries, should be decided again with the experience of its own struggle corresponding to the special concrete conditions of its activity.

It is therefore understood that tactics will emerge among Russian Social Democrats only when a theoretical tendency is turned into a practical movement with the rudiments of organisation. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group gave us a substantiation of the ideas of scientific socialism adapted to Russia; it, following the example of the Western-European Social Democracy, correctly formulated the basic programmatic principles – this constitutes its incontrovertible historical service. But it did not give us and *could not* give us tactics. However much it tried to formulate tactical views, it was limited, until the emergence of a real Social-Democratic movement in Russia, to general positions, which did not give the least indication regarding activity and subsequently wavered between timid doctrinaire criticism of the activity of

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33 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 29, pp. 261–7.



Russian Social-Democratic organisations and silent discontent with this activity, and even some measure of active support for it. (By the way, this is a new example of the phenomenon of firmness of principles alone not preventing unprincipled vacillations.)

Incidentally, *Iskra* refers to the 'decision' of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group only on the question of terror, and only in the polemical feuilleton of its fourth issue does it indirectly reveal its strangely un-Social-Democratic understanding of what tactical tasks are. In the programmatic editorial of No. 1, it comes close to a concrete-historical understanding of this matter, though in connection with the more general tasks of Social Democracy: 'In Russia, the need to unite socialism with the workers' movement was already proclaimed a long time ago – but in practice this unification is being worked out only at the present time. The process of this working-out is a very difficult one and there is nothing particularly surprising in the fact that it is accompanied by various vacillations and doubts.

From the point of view clearly developed by us above, there is not only 'nothing particularly surprising' here, there is absolutely nothing at all to be surprised at: more precisely, 'vacillations and doubts' in the *process* of working out tactics are directly *unavoidable*. After what has been said by us, it is clear why, in the very same programmatic lead article, in which *Iskra* distinguishes between the 'theoretical pronouncement' of a task and its practical realisation, in agreement with our opinion, tactics-as-plan is also rejected (this passage is quoted above.)

In general, in the programmatic editorial of *Iskra* there is not one opinion with which we could disagree. Unfortunately, the opinions forming the basis of this article are not everywhere promoted in *Iskra* and even diametrically opposed opinions are expressed alongside it. This is shown particularly clearly in the question of a tactical plan (leading article, fourth issue) and on the question of what is a task or a 'question' (feuilleton, fourth issue). It is possible to say that *Iskra*, in all its various opinions and conclusions, vacillates between the programmatic editorial on the one hand and the leading article and feuilleton in No. 4 on the other. This is its *left hand and its right*. And the size of these vacillations, as we have seen, sometimes reaches 180 degrees.

Only those who do nothing make no mistakes. The activity of the Social-Democratic organisations in the past was undoubtedly not free of mistakes and fallacies. But because of an individual mistake, one should not forget the *law-governed character* of the Social-Democratic movement in the past and its service in the capacity of a preparatory stage – we should not forget that all our most recent tactical opinions and, most importantly, our most recent practical tasks, are first of all the result of the growth of our movement and

not the result of 'theoretical pronouncement' alone. *Iskra* and *Zaria* too easily forget all this.<sup>34</sup>

Anyway, the very appearance of these two organs, especially *Iskra*, would have been impossible without the strengthening of the revolutionary-political tendency in the movement itself. It is characteristic in this connection that *criticism* of the pamphlet *On Agitation*, which was itself published by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in 1896, appeared only five years later, in *Zaria* (Plekhanov's article: 'Once More, Socialism and Political Struggle').<sup>35</sup> We do not think to reproach the author of this article for not printing this criticism at the same time as the pamphlet *On Agitation* – he would have simply been *unable* to write it then.

For some reason, only the period of our movement *up to 1898* is recognised as normal, so to speak. Since 1898, in the opinion of *Iskra* (feuilleton, fourth issue), a period of 'Economist' error has begun. Here there is not space to prove the untruth of this opinion in detail by using specific facts. We refer the reader

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34 Thus in its review of the *Manifesto* of the Social-Revolutionary Party (No. 5), *Iskra* calls this organisation to the banner of Social Democracy. But what is the basis of this? It is not the fact that the contemporary Social-Democratic *movement* stands on the very same principled and tactical basis as the *Manifesto* of the Social Revolutionaries, but the fact that the opinion of the latter on revolutionary activity corresponds with... the views of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group (its *Draft Programme* of 1885) almost down to the last detail. We doubt that such a basis, which is accompanied by a reference to 'badly-raised Social Democrats who deny the political struggle' especially entices the Social Revolutionaries to stand under the banner of the Social-Democratic *Party* [Krichevskii's footnote].

35 *On Agitation* was originally written by Martov and the Bund activist, Arkady Kremer, in 1894 and was published in Geneva in 1896 by the Union of Russian Social Democrats, having previously been circulated in hectographed form. Plekhanov's article, '*Eshche paz sotsializm i politicheskaia bor'ba*' (*Zaria* No. 1, pp. 1–32 or Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 67–102), does indeed criticise the work for its apparent willingness to remain silent as to the final goal of Social Democracy (democracy, socialism) when addressing a broad or politically undeveloped audience. This attack on a work that had been in circulation for many years seems quite bizarre, especially as Plekhanov could have rehearsed very similar arguments in relation to Krichevskii's article in *Rabochee Delo* No. 7 (Chapter 6 in the collection), which was of much more recent vintage and whose author, unlike Martov, belonged to his factional opponents. One can only surmise that Plekhanov either wished to remind Martov of a past he found objectionable for some reason, or that he was indirectly expressing contempt for, and drawing attention to, the derivative nature of Krichevskii's tactical argument by replying to the original.

to our report to the international Congress of 1900.<sup>36</sup> We only say that, in this respect, *Iskra* exaggerates the significance of specific occurrences and forgets about the *general*, unceasing, *political growth* of Russian Social Democracy, which has especially started to strengthen precisely since 1898.

*The setting of its own programme and its own group against the movement* as if it were something independent, like a higher theoretical authority, like a spirit hovering over formless chaos – this is the position *Iskra* and *Zaria* adopt not only in relation to the past but also – and this is much more important – in relation to the movement which is taking place before our very eyes, in so far as the latter corresponds with the work of the Party organisations...

The new publications, which by their *scientific* and *propagandistic* content represent a great enrichment of Social-Democratic literature, in themselves destroy a part of their use and legitimate influence to the extent that they set themselves against the movement. Through this they assist *mutual misunderstanding between theoreticians and practicals* which can reduce the necessary influence – within certain limits – of theory on practice to nothing and, on the other hand, distort theory into dead doctrine through its isolation from practice.

The lack of space – without this our article has already grown overly-long – prevents us from dwelling in detail on this side of our disagreement. We will only point out the greatest blunder of *Iskra* in this respect – its '*plan*' for an *all-Party organisation* (issue four), the head of which would be an 'all-Russian newspaper' and the 'skeleton' a 'network of agents' who would distribute this newspaper!...<sup>37</sup>

We naturally fully agree with *Iskra* that the demand for an all-Russian Party newspaper has ripened and that such a newspaper could prove to be of great service to our entire movement. But *Iskra's* 'plan' allows the most essential condition for the success of such a newspaper to escape from view and in

36 *Rabochee Delo* No. 8, pp. 1–24. The 1900 Paris Congress of the Second International was characterised by an important debate between supporters and opponents of the French socialist parliamentarian Millerand's entry into a left-republican cabinet. (See Chapter 8, footnote 12 and Chapter 21, footnote 19, for further details of this development and the debates it produced). Krichevskii's report covers this debate and tries to emphasise the organisational unity obtained in most parties of the International despite such tactical disagreements, whilst also giving brief accounts of debates around the possibility of obtaining a legally enforced minimum wage, the possibility of organising an international general strike, militarism, the eight-hour day and municipal socialism.

37 These phrases are taken from Lenin's article 'Where To Begin?' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 13–24).

particular stands the relationship which should normally exist between a Party newspaper and a Party organisation on its head. We do not even mention the organisation of a *Social-Democratic* Party, which does not have any meaning without tight, living and broad connections with the working masses and which can grow – in distinction from conspiratorial organisations – only *from below, from local organisations and through their unification*; the fact is, of course, that it is not the newspaper that can found the Party organisation, but on the contrary, the Social-Democratic Party that can create its own central press organ. We do not even mention the fact that a paper which stands *above* the Party, *beyond its control* and independent of it thanks to its own ‘network of agents’, can be the organ of an individual person, an individual group, a society of conspirators or a sect, but never the organ of a Social-Democratic Party which can be developed only in *democratic* forms of organisation . . . No, we do not even mention all these seemingly generally-known and generally-recognised things. We only ask ourselves: *by what miracle did Iskra forget about the actually existing Social-Democratic organisations of that Party to which it belongs?* How did it happen that it constructed its entire plan on its own future ‘network of agents’ whilst the existing ‘local committees’ are only recalled in the footnotes?!

The answer to these questions gives us the general view of the tactics laid out in the leading article of the fourth issue, and in the ‘plan’ for an all-Russian newspaper. So long as for *Iskra*, or the author of this leading article,<sup>38</sup> tactics are ‘*only* a systematically and unswervingly conducted plan’, for which the ‘elucidation of firm principles’ alone is demanded, then it is clear that the possessor of firm principles and the corresponding ‘plan’ is the higher regulator of the real struggle of the Party, to which the carrying out of the plan is dictated, and which is brought into conformity, thanks to its reorganisation from scratch, to this plan. It is also clear that their own ‘network of agents’ is preferred ahead of the existing committees, which are organisations of the Party with full and equal rights, daring to have their own opinion . . .

Incidentally, the ‘plan’ in No. 4 seems to be only one of those rash displays of the *left hand* on the part of *Iskra*, which poorly gets along with the more realistic elements of its *right*. It is hard to think that the ‘plan’ of *Iskra*, which will chase our living and lively organisations into the kingdom of shadows and which wants to induce life in a fantastic ‘network of agents’, expresses the unanimous

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38 We introduce this alternative in view of the contrasting declarations of the programmatic lead article in *Iskra* No. 1. Incidentally, the feuilleton of No. 4 also refers to the ‘plan’ in the lead article of No. 4 [Krichevskii’s footnote].

and final opinion of *Iskra*. But this plan all the same shows the danger threatening the normal development of Russian Social Democracy, albeit using a magnifying glass, of doctrinaire elements setting themselves against the practical struggle of active organisations as a higher authority, as an *Oberkriegsrat* of the Party: these tendencies could divide that which should be closely linked – theory and practice, literature and struggle, and could convert Russian Social Democracy *from a Party into a sect*.

## 5

Now we can answer the question of whether the unification of the Social-Democratic organisations active in the emigration is possible and, if so, the limits within which this can be done.

Of course, we cannot exhaust *all* the points of disagreement, those which have already appeared in a more or less well defined form, and those which have not yet been defined, but which are capable of being developed in the course of our movement from imperceptible origins, in one article of our journal. In particular, we have not been able to juxtapose our view on the further development of scientific socialism to the one wishing to call itself the 'orthodox' view in this article, a view which *apparently* dominates in *Zaria* and *Iskra*, though their editors, like all Marxists, naturally stand for further work on that which, for the present, constitutes only the groundwork and the general lines of that edifice which is scientific socialism. We have not been able here to formulate our attitude to tendencies in the development of the Western-European socialist movement, or to the disagreements in the midst of the latter – an attitude which appears to differ to a certain degree from the opinions of *Iskra* and *Zaria* (in so far as the latter have managed to express themselves regarding this matter).

In particular, we have in view the inclination of *Iskra* and *Zaria* to predict a rupture between the 'Montagne' and the 'Gironde' of international Social Democracy (*Zaria*, Plekhanov's note on the international Congress and the leading article of *Iskra* No. 2). For us in general, talk about a 'Montagne' and a 'Gironde' in the ranks of Social Democracy represents a superficial historical analogy, which is strange coming from the pen of a *Marxist*: the 'Montagne' and the 'Gironde' did not represent different *temperaments* or *intellectual tendencies* as it might seem to historian-ideologues, but *different classes* or *social layers* – the middle bourgeoisie on the one hand and the petty bourgeoisie plus the proletariat on the other. In the contemporary socialist movement there is no clash of class interests, in all its diversity, including the most inveterate

Bernsteinians, all of it stands on the basis of the class interests of the proletariat, and its class struggle for political and economic emancipation.<sup>39</sup>

We did not speak in the end about differences in the evaluation of economic struggle as a means of attracting the masses to political struggle: *Iskra* and *Zaria* clearly underestimate this means of struggle both in the past and in the present, or at any rate they grant it a lesser significance than we do.

But it seems to us that we outlined disagreements that were much more essential from the point of view of the tasks permissible to, and obligatory for, an émigré Social-Democratic organisation. And our attempt to trace the details of these disagreements to its general root makes superfluous an analysis of every one of them separately. True, the general root of the disagreements lies *perhaps* still deeper than was indicated by us: the disagreement on the question of the basis of tactics in its turn, perhaps, is drawn from a different understanding of Marxism in general: (we express ourselves tentatively because, for the moment, *Zaria* and *Iskra* do not give us the possibility of drawing definite conclusions in this respect). But, we repeat, from the point of view of the activity of an émigré organisation, the disagreements mentioned above are most essential.

Furthermore, for all the disagreement, the matter is in essence one of *shades* and not of heterogeneous opinions, it is about differences of *degree* and not of *type*. We can also find opinions in *Zaria* and *Iskra* themselves which oppose one another even on some fundamental point of disagreement.

On the other hand, we share with *Iskra* and *Zaria* not only a common basis of Marxism and programmatic principles, we are also coming closer to them in our views on the practical tasks of the Russian Social Democracy at the present moment, though we came to these opinions by a different route to *Zaria* and *Iskra* – through an organic unification of principled considerations and the practical experience of our movement, which had prepared the current tasks in the process of its growth. Among Social Democrats there can no longer be arguments, not only about the main and immediate practical goal of attracting the working masses to active political struggle around the slogan of a democratic constitution, but also about the most important means that lead to this goal.

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39 Incidentally, the article on the Paris international Congress of 1900 (*Rabochee Delo* No. 8) gives some idea of our attitude to the contemporary tendencies in the development of Western-European Social Democracy, and it is possible to compare it to Plekhanov's report in *Zaria* on this very same Congress [Krichevskii's footnote].

Therefore we consider the unification of the émigré Social-Democratic organisations to be possible and of course necessary – unification within those limits which we noted at the start of this article.

The growth of every Social-Democratic movement is unavoidably accompanied by disagreements which – within the limits, of course, of a shared principled basis – can only assist the further healthy growth of the Party, if only they do not lead to an organisational split, if space and scope is given for the ideological struggle of different opinions within the framework of one common organisation. The secret of the unexampled growth of the German Social Democracy lies to a significant degree in its preservation of Party unity along with the free struggle of opinions, with full freedom of criticism. At the same time, not one Workers' Party in the world stands as high in theoretical matters as the German Social Democracy. Freedom of criticism thus serves the practical and the theoretical growth of the Party. It preserves it from ossification – the unavoidable penalty for the forcible constriction of thought in the name of badly-understood principle and discipline. What is important is *unity in action* – but not the unity of the barracks, unity which is not the result of extrinsic square bashing, but the result of a free concordance aiming at one goal – in a word, *the unity of the Party and not the unity of a sect*. The German Social Democracy amounts to a model for such unity.

The diametrically opposite type of Party development in this sense is French socialism. Here every disagreement that is in the least bit important has led to an organisational split. Every shade has constructed its own organisation, each of which has withdrawn into its own shell. The further these disagreements go, the more everything is broadened and deepened; but, fanning the flames artificially and making matters complex through organisational discord, they have led not to that struggle of opinion which refines and develops, but to the corrupting fist-fight of polemic. The other, no less harmful side of this development, is the absence of any criticism, dogmatic ossification within each of these organisations – those who disagree in the sphere of ideas have permanently and unavoidably broken with their current organisation or have been compelled to do so. It only remains to compare the current state of French and German socialism in order to fully assess the harm this impatience brings to the development of Social Democracy.

Our young Party perhaps now stands at a crossroads, from which two different paths of development lead: the German or the French. We prefer the first and this will be preferred, together with us, by the whole Social Democracy which, for the sake of the imagined interests of doctrine, does not forget the interests of struggle. And we are certain that *Iskra* and *Zaria* will prefer this



path like us, the living and revolutionary right hand of which should overcome their doctrinaire left in the end.

Finally: the Party – it is not a discussion club but a fighting organisation which demands discipline in action. But, we repeat, in the *Social-Democratic* Party there is least of all place for the discipline of barracks or the religious obedience of sects. Only the decision of the *majority* is binding on every Party member, and these decisions can and should only be the result of the free struggle of opinions on the general basis of Party principles.

‘The unification of revolutionaries *does not constitute a necessary condition for their success*’, writes Plekhanov in *Zaria* in relation to the unanimous call for unity addressed to the French socialists (at the first session of the International Congress of 1900) by the leaders of international Social Democracy. ‘The necessary condition for the success of the struggle of the proletariat is the unification of all their forces’ – we read in *Iskra* (No. 6, ‘Letter from France’). Naturally, in this case we agree with *Iskra* but not with *Zaria*. Yes, the unification of the proletariat is *necessary* for its successful struggle. Freedom of criticism is necessary for firm unity, the free and comradely struggle of opinions within the framework of a common world-view and common programmatic-tactical views.

The unification of the Social Democrats understood in *this* sense acts, furthermore, as the first step towards the *unification of all Russian revolutionary socialists* – a unification which will become all the more possible, the more Russian Social Democracy strengthens, the further it is from being a sect and the closer it is to being a Party.

## Alexander Martynov, 'Exposure Literature and Proletarian Struggle', *Rabochee Delo* No. 10

*Rabochee Delo* No. 10 contains a second polemical article, 'Exposure Literature and Proletarian Struggle', written by Alexander Samoilovich Martynov (1865–1935),<sup>1</sup> which differs somewhat in its line of attack from Krichevskii's article. This article focuses rather more on the content and style of the *Iskra* newspaper than its general conception of 'scientific socialism'. In this way, it reflects a rather more serious attitude to the June agreement than the one indicated by Krichevskii. In it, Martynov tries to give the impression that *Iskra* was suffering from a detachment from the growing revolutionary movement in Russia, and that material of greater relevance to those who participated in the events of February and March 1901 was necessary in its columns. Specifically, and as the title of the article implies, he argues that *Iskra* had placed excessive emphasis on quasi-academic 'exposures' of injustices perpetrated by the autocratic system without giving any real indications as to 'what was to be done' about them.<sup>2</sup> He claims that *Iskra* alludes to an alternative political and social system based on the paragraphs of

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- 1 Aleksandr Samoilovich Pikker ('Martynov') (1865–1935), a revolutionary activist in his school days, joined 'People's Will' in 1884, shortly after entering St. Petersburg University to study law. He was arrested and expelled and after a second arrest was exiled to Siberia, where he remained until 1899 and where he was won over to Marxism. After returning to European Russia, he joined the RSDLP in Ekaterinoslav, where he was arrested for a third time, serving 18 months in prison, after which he left Russia and joined the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. Arriving in the emigration in the summer of 1901, he took a clear stance against the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, criticising its earlier departure from the Union Abroad as unwarranted and insisting that the Union Abroad was the sole legitimate RSDLP organisation in the emigration. He later represented the Union at the Second Congress of the RSDLP and subsequently supported the Mensheviks up until the revolution. He played no important role in the events of 1917, but in 1923 joined the Communist Party and started working at the Marx-Engels Institute. He became prominent in the Comintern where, according to Trotsky, he was a supporter of Stalin's own 'theory of stages', which stated that backward countries had to pass through an extended capitalist phase of development before a socialist revolution was possible. Trotsky claims that Martynov defended this theory's application to China, arguing that the Chinese Communist Party should remain part of the nationalist Guomindang, even though the latter had violently suppressed workers' revolts during 1925–7.
  - 2 In this sense, it is tempting to regard the title of Lenin's pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, as being influenced not only by the 1862 novel by Chernyshevskii of the same name, but also by Martynov's article, which is subject to detailed criticism in the pamphlet.

*Plekhanov's or Lenin's programmatic statements in its articles, whilst failing to give concrete inspiration and guidance to an audience thirsting for revolutionary action. He criticises Iskra for certain negative remarks it made concerning the tactical choices of revolutionaries operating inside Russia and concludes that émigrés should confine themselves to questions of principle and theory, leaving matters of practical policy and tactics to activists actually working in Russia. On these grounds, Martynov also criticises Lenin's notion that a political newspaper produced by émigrés such as Iskra could serve as an organisational centre for the reunification of the RSDLP, protesting that such a plan would bypass the already-existing structures of the Party, the local committees, a concern also raised by Krichevskii.*

*Martynov's complaint about the excessive amount of 'political exposure' in Iskra seems intended to counter Lenin's enthusiastic support for a newspaper devoted to such articles in 'Where To Begin?' However, it does not appear to be based on a serious survey of the newspaper's actual contents so much as a subjective impression, and it often lacks the support of convincing evidence. Whilst it is true that there are some articles in Iskra's first five issues which simply describe a tsarist injustice, explaining its causes without recommending a concrete course of action to the workers' movement,<sup>3</sup> others, including one cited by Martynov himself in the course of his review, contain quite dramatic reports from the scene of demonstrations.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as Martynov's own polemical remarks in the article testify, some of these accounts include an evaluation of the tactical choices of the participants. These comments in themselves often seem to contribute to the working-out of effective tactics and therefore testify to the practical orientation of the newspaper.*

*Thus, in the article concerning the St. Petersburg demonstrations which Martynov himself cites,<sup>5</sup> the Iskra correspondent advocates the organisation of demonstrations in the working-class suburbs to develop the movement taking place in the city centre. Whilst this advice is evidently not to the liking of the reviewer, and a difference of tactical opinion does appear to exist on this question, Martynov can hardly oppose this opinion whilst simultaneously arguing that Iskra does not offer concrete direction to the revolutionary movement. Similar advice is also on hand in relation to events in which Iskra and its supporters obviously had no direct involvement. Thus we learn from Martynov's own criticism that Iskra opposes the killing of unmasked spies in the manner of Polish socialists tried and sentenced by a military court in Warsaw. In preference to this, Iskra*

3 One obvious example of this would be *Iskra* No. 1, p. 2 /Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 372–7.

4 Lepeshinskii 1901.

5 See previous note.

appears to advocate the tactic of using kidnapped spies to serve as collateral for arrested activists.<sup>6</sup>

Martynov tries to fight his way out of these difficulties with the argument that most of Iskra's recommendations actually apply rather more to the Social Democrats themselves than to the masses, in the sense that it is implicitly Social-Democratic activists who will listen to advice on how to deal with spies and how to organise new demonstrations, rather than the mass of ordinary workers, who require less technical forms of instruction and in any case have ideas of their own. In this way, Martynov tries to build up a picture of an Iskra-ite Social Democracy in which activists in Russia are answerable more to an émigré-journalist leadership than to the workers among whom they live, arguing that they will form an organisation separate from the working class, lacking connections with it. Here he appears to be on slightly stronger ground, as he can hint that Lenin's emphasis on rebuilding Social-Democratic organisations has little to do with guiding the broader revolutionary movement of workers. He supports his claim with reference to the case of a leaflet being distributed to fourteen thousand workers, none of whom responded to its appeal.

This picture is developed with a complaint that Lenin wants to bypass the existing RSDLP organisations in rebuilding it around Iskra, the result being a group of émigré intellectuals and their Russian 'agents' trying to 'substitute' themselves for the Party as a whole, just as the newspaper, in terms of its choice of audience, 'substitutes' Social-Democratic activists for the working class as a whole. However, the validity of this claim should be tested against the 'constitution' of the Iskra organisation in Russia,<sup>7</sup> which refers to no more than 16 individual 'agents', and which in any case recommends their active involvement in the existing RSDLP committees.

The political purpose served by Martynov's polemic is not immediately obvious. In a memoir composed during the 1920s, the author claims that, having joined the emigration in early 1901, he sided with the Union Abroad and opposed the June Conference, believing that the Union represented the only legitimate émigré RSDLP organisation and opposed reconciliation with the Plekhanovites.<sup>8</sup> This would suggest that in the wake of the meeting, which he was apparently unable to attend owing to illness, Martynov simply set about wrecking the agreement. However, for all the needling of Iskra evident in his article, it does not appear to pose as direct a challenge to the points of the June agreement as Krichevskii's contribution, even if there is more than a hint of 'stagism' in one particular passage.

6 S.N. 1901a.

7 See Chapter 11.

8 This can be found in: *Bolshaia biograficheskaia entsyklopediia* 2009.

*The June positions are not rejected as such, it is merely argued that by themselves they do not go far enough, that they merely concern the 'propaganda', the dissemination of theory rather than 'agitation', a summons to action.*

*All this could suggest that Martynov was perhaps not angling for the complete split he describes in his memoir and that, much like Krichevskii but with greater subtlety, he was aiming at the coexistence of a Union Abroad publication with a pro-'Emancipation of Labour' publication within the framework of a united emigration. If this were the case, Martynov would probably have wanted Listok Rabochego Dela or some replacement of it to focus on popular 'agitation', whilst the various circles connected to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and Iskra produced a theoretical journal. The latter, of course, would have been Zaria and it may therefore be significant that this journal is not mentioned in the review, as it is in Krichevskii's piece. Instead, all Martynov's critical fire is directed at Iskra and especially at its organisational pretensions, a feature perhaps indicating that he hoped émigré reunification would come at the cost of the discontinuation of this publication.*

## Exposure Literature and Proletarian Struggle

(Iskra No. 1–5)

AS Martynov

In 1892, when the Social-Democratic movement among our workers had only just arisen, Plekhanov published the pamphlet, *On the Tasks of Socialists in the Struggle with Famine in Russia*.<sup>9</sup> In this little book, the author argued that the aims of contemporary socialists 'represent only the conscious expression of an unconscious, blind historical process' and that 'the aims of Russian Social Democrats in the struggle with the poverty which has struck the Russian people can and should only be the conscious expression of an unconscious process called the historical development of Russia'. This unconscious process – one of the symptoms of which is hunger – inexorably leads to the fall of the autocracy. Given the political situation, there is no possibility of fighting popular poverty, according to the author, and the autocratic government is absolutely powerless in this respect. In view of this process, our 'most important, if not *only* task'

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9 An excerpt from this work can be found in English translation: see Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 100–7.

is 'that of assisting the growth of proletarian consciousness'. In the opinion of the author, the only possible activity for a socialist is political propaganda among workers. True, he reckons that history is only made by the masses, and that propaganda only serves as a precursor to mass agitation. But agitation is not qualitatively distinguished in any sense from propaganda in his opinion: 'If it were still necessary to explain the mutual relation between agitation and propaganda, I would add that the propagandist transmits many ideas to one individual or several individuals, whereas the agitator takes only one or a few ideas but transmits them to a whole mass of people'.

As a Social Democrat, Plekhanov then as now stood under the banner of the proletariat and wrote his programme for it. But 10 years ago, the Russian proletariat was *independently* capable of expressing its struggle with the existing system only in the embryonic form of uncoordinated struggle between workers and owners. Constructing his programme for the politically inactive and disorganised proletariat, Plekhanov reduced all our tactics to the propaganda of revolutionary ideas among the workers, whilst not in the least touching on the means which workers would acquire for the systematic struggle with, and the systematic disorganisation of, the autocratic government, in proportion to their class development.

Since Plekhanov wrote the aforementioned pamphlet, much water has flowed under the bridge. Against a general backcloth of political reaction, timid liberal opposition to definite aspects of the autocratic regime has here and there manifested itself; from time to time, student revolt has flared up with a bright flame. But only in the proletariat did the revolutionary ferment grow systematically and uninterruptedly. Whilst appearing to conduct a struggle for its economic interests alone, the proletariat gradually acquired direct or indirect influence on different aspects of our state and public life. Social Democrats who have directed the economic struggle of the working class for 10 years and who have been weakly connected with one another and have been absorbed with local work, still have not managed to give a broad theoretical basis to Party tactics. Now this question has become an urgent one, and if we want to create such a theoretical basis, it is beyond doubt that we should significantly deepen those principles of tactics which Plekhanov once worked out. In close connection with the spontaneous process which is now being completed 'any old how', the proletariat, with its growing and more sophisticated influence on life, is now carrying out the systematic destruction of the basis of the autocracy. Accordingly, the tasks of agitation have grown more complex, the differences between agitation and propaganda now have to be defined in a manner different to that of Plekhanov. By propaganda we would understand the revolutionary illumination of the whole of the present system or of its partial manifestations – it does not matter whether this is done in a

form accessible to individuals or to the general public. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word, we would understand the calling of the masses to some definite concrete activities conducive to an immediate revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in the life of society.

Since December of last year, a new Social-Democratic publication has been appearing – *Iskra*. This newspaper has generated a revision of our previous methods of struggle and we had a right to expect that it would pose the question of tactics as broadly as is demanded by the present balance of social forces in Russia. But, as far as can be seen from the five issues of *Iskra* that have already appeared, it pays attention to just one side of the matter which is the main question for us Social Democrats, that of the tactics of the workers' movement – just as Plekhanov did previously, one-and-a-half decades ago.

'The immediate political task of the Russian Workers Party should be the overthrow of the autocracy', we read in the first number of *Iskra*.<sup>10</sup> 'Assisting the political development and political organisation of the working class is our fundamental task', *Iskra* declares accordingly.<sup>11</sup> *Iskra* entirely correctly understood what its main task should be, and one must note that *Iskra* appeared at a highly favourable moment for this task's realisation: the crisis which has broken out in the whole of Russia and the mindless persecution of students by the government,<sup>12</sup> which had given an immense electrical charge to our political atmosphere just before *Iskra*'s appearance. Let us see how well the latter did this task justice.

First of all, we entirely agree with *Iskra* that we should make the idea of the overthrow of the autocracy into our fighting slogan and that we should, of course, use every occasion to popularise this idea among the broad mass of the population in order to realise our task. It should become the subject of the very broadest mass propaganda. In so far as *Iskra* is guided by this tactic, in so far as it uncovers the rotten core of every senseless hope being placed in the autocracy and that section of the opposition which has become reconciled with it, we can only welcome its activity. But *Iskra* is occupied with just one thing – it 'exposes' our system, and this one-sided tactic undoubtedly stands on a false road where it is elevated, consciously or unconsciously, to a principle. The autocracy is heading toward bankruptcy and this gives us the opportunity and the responsibility of discrediting it at every step. But however much

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10 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, p. 366.

11 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, p. 369.

12 This is another reference to the struggle against the 'Temporary Regulations' – see the commentary to Chapter 7 for details.



we sow mistrust and hatred towards it, we will not reach our aim so long as we have not managed to develop the active social forces required for its overthrow.

These forces are being developed by different means in different social strata. Students, for example, pursuing their academic interests, fight for a change in their university system; capitalists, following their economic interests, try to increase their oversight and influence on the state and its fiscal apparatus; the landowners, preserving the traditions of the 'ruling class', are infused with the interests of the big estates, which try to preserve their influence on agriculture, on *zemstvo* self-government and so forth.<sup>13</sup> All these manifestations of public activity sooner or later run into the obstacle presented by the autocratic regime. Therefore, at a critical moment for the government, different social layers will more or less overtly add their voices to the general chorus of those discontented with our political system, though during normal times they unavoidably go in separate directions. It is well-known, for example, that many liberals were pleased with both the Karpovich shooting<sup>14</sup> and the revolutionary character of the student disturbances which were supported by 'ordinary people'. But news about *isolated* disturbances at the Obukhov factory provoked anxious fear and was met with hostility in liberal circles. Incidentally, even at the sharpest moment of the February and March days,<sup>15</sup> many students who had eagerly participated in demonstrations expressed dissatisfaction when workers joined them, as this gave these demonstrations a revolutionary colouring that was altogether too bright. In view of this, it is clear that we Social Democrats cannot guide the activity of all the different opposition layers at the same time, that we cannot dictate a positive programme of action to them and that we cannot indicate the means to them with which they should fight for their interests on a day-to-day basis. In relation to them, we can only play the negative role of an exposé of systems. This exposure will have political significance in the sense that the liberal layers will surely by themselves become exercised with that active struggle for their immediate interests which will place them in head-on conflict with our political regime. It is not our task, for example, to tell the students how they must achieve improvements in the university system; they will do this better without us. We can only shatter the hopes they place in different governmental commissions. *Iskra* has unswervingly adhered to this exposure tactic. But if this tactic is correct in relation to radical and liberal society, then it is completely inadequate in relation to the proletariat. Here our obligations are much broader. We Social Democrats

13 See Introduction, footnote 45.

14 See Chapter 7, footnote 16.

15 This refers to the demonstrations against the 'Temporary Regulations' of February–March 1901.

are representatives of the interests of the proletariat. Thus, in relation to it, we are not only obliged to point out whatever prevents the realisation of its interests – we are constantly obliged to give it something positive, to formulate its immediate demands and to indicate the means to their realisation. More than this, we should take the initiative in proletarian struggle, we should aim at increasing the activity of the working masses so that, in the cause of that most burning question for Russia – the conquest of political freedom – a role falls to the proletariat which has never fallen to it in any European country.

We consider it very likely that many of the current cowardly or reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie and of cultured society in general will raise their voices in favour of a constitution at the moment of the autocracy's liquidation, and with this will finally resolve matters against the latter. We consider it very likely that the initiative for decisive encounters with the autocracy will issue from the commoner-intelligentsia, for whom political freedom is life's greatest question. But it is now beyond doubt that the main permanent source of revolutionary energy is actually the working masses. Workers are always inclined to struggle because both material needs and social persecution unceasingly gnaw at their lives and unceasingly push them into struggle. Workers want to conduct this struggle on a day-to-day basis, and need to remember that reading revolutionary literature is not the same thing as fighting. We will cease to be a workers' party if we cannot lead this struggle, we will lose the trust of the working masses and we will lose our moral influence over them. We Social Democrats should, above all else, guide the proletarian struggle. Therefore our agitational tactics should flesh out the guiding principles of the mass struggle of the proletariat, both for those sharp revolutionary periods which Russia has passed through just recently, and for normal conditions. Under normal conditions, workers beginning economic struggles will not, and should not, give them up. The Social Democrats have contributed much toward the advancement of these economic struggles. Now, the task of how to give as much of a political character as possible to these economic struggles stands before them. We are not going to lay out a programme here: we only note that the past experience of our movement gives an indication as to how this task should be carried out. If our Party had been united and organised, at the current moment the possibility would have presented itself of bringing a proletariat, which is engaged in economic struggle, face to face with an autocratic government that is in its essence hostile to any glimmer of a social movement. Our Party would have been able to present concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures against economic exploitation, against unemployment, against hunger and so forth. Such demands would not have been empty sounds because, promising definite tangible results, they could have been actively supported by

the working masses. And it is beyond doubt that such tactics would have had a revolutionary significance under current political conditions. Clashing with the government on the basis of concrete economic demands, the workers would have emerged from these clashes not in a conciliatory, but in a much more revolutionary mood. For great layers of the working population, the concept of the state merges with the concept of the police. It is possible to hate the police, but one cannot demand anything from them. Raising the level of the demands of the working masses in relation to the state, we at the same time open the eyes of the workers to what the state should be and to what the autocratic state cannot be. Of course, if we recommend the presentation of definite economic demands to the government on the part of the workers, we do this because the autocratic government is ready, where needs must, to make concessions in the *economic* sphere. Yet along with this we very well know that, in the absence of popular representation, public supervision, freedom of speech and so forth, in a word, with autocratic rule, the economic measures of the government and especially its realisation of them serve as the best means for discrediting it. Thus, every concession obtained by the workers from the government gives us a weapon for a greater revolutionisation of the working masses. It is beyond doubt that, if the autocratic government took a completely neutral attitude to the struggle of labour with capital, if it, at the time of hunger and unemployment adopted passive tactics and granted the right to solve the problem of the people's poverty to public initiative, it would not give so much room for criticism and it would not be able to reveal all the rottenness of the bureaucratic system to such a degree as it does now, thanks to state intervention. Besides, the government nonetheless intervenes in economic life whether we want it to or not, and it is much more beneficial for us if it is done under our own revolutionary pressure. In such circumstances we could justifiably ascribe all the benefit in these measures to our revolutionary pressure and all that is bad to the government's malice and powerlessness. Therefore we should not cease to demand radical economic measures from the government nor cease to expose its radical worthlessness.

The economic struggle of the workers with the owners and with the government has, apart from its immediate revolutionary significance, a further significance in that it continuously leads the workers to the question of their own lack of rights. What is more, this forms the basis not only for propaganda but for agitation, not only for criticism of the autocratic regime but for an ongoing struggle with it. The fact that the attitude of the autocratic government to the political interests of the workers is fundamentally different from its attitude to their economic interests is beyond doubt. If it is capable of making formal, half-hearted economic concessions, then it cannot make any real political

concessions to the workers without disavowing itself.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, it only feebly roots out *actual* manifestations of political life in the working masses. Thus the basis is created for constant clashes between the growing political life of the working class and the growing political oppression of it on the part of the government. Agitational tactics cannot therefore use this oppression to pose partial political demands without linking the latter to the need to change the entire autocratic regime, as this would only mean leading workers in a mistaken direction. On the other hand, agitational tactics can use this oppression to excite the resistance and protest of the working masses against individual displays of administrative arbitrariness and against governmental reprisals.

Every act of government arbitrariness provokes a certain revolutionary mood in the masses, which the agitator must make use of to a maximum degree, even if the opportunity of raising the masses to an immediate protest against the autocracy has not presented itself. If, for example, the police arrest participants in a workers' meeting, the committee can call the masses to *protest* against the fact that they are deprived of the freedom to hold meetings and *demand* the liberation of those arrested, by means of proclamations. If, at such a demonstration, a conscious worker manages to make a speech that explains the link between the absence of freedom to hold meetings and the whole autocratic regime, so much the better. In any case, the committee is obliged to explain this in its propaganda leaflets. The agitator must find the appropriate form for the active expression of even the most embryonic political mood of the working masses. *Iskra* too probably believes this, but it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that this aspect of agitational tactics stands in close connection with what we said earlier, which *Iskra* ignores. It cannot be doubted that the higher the level to which the economic and civil demands of the proletariat are raised in relation to the state, the more occasion the government will give for political protests against its own bureaucratic and police methods. We have far from exhausted the methods of agitation tactics. The methods we have talked about are inadequate, for example, in relation to the revolutionary moment, but on the other hand, they are entirely suitable for the preparation of this moment. And when that moment comes, then agitation

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16 We very well know that even in our slavish country there are different gradations of civil rights and personal inviolability, even as regards the various strata of the common people. But in speaking of the incompatibility of workers' political rights with the autocracy, we do not have in mind those elementary rights such as freedom from corporal punishment and socks to the jaw which the ordinary *urban resident* has *partly* won for himself [Martynov's footnote].

will once again have the goal of exciting the working masses to specific actions corresponding to this moment. That means not being limited to criticism and to exposure alone. To repeat, we are not laying out a detailed programme here, we only note the qualitative difference between conceptions of propaganda and agitation in order to have a criteria for evaluating the *Iskra* tendency.

Since the very first issue, *Iskra* has displayed its fervent revolutionary attitude towards Russian reality. But when the question is one of immediate struggle, it does not speak so much about what it is necessary to do, so much as warn against what should not be done. As regards the killing of Polish spies we read, for example: 'The Party *should not fight with individual phenomena, but against that basis* on which these phenomena unavoidably grow. And this basis is the complete disenfranchisement of the whole Russian people, especially the working class, the absolutism of the tsarist government and the general conditions of the capitalist system . . .'.<sup>17</sup>

The Polish comrades, having killed a spy, did not in the final analysis fight against the spy as an individual. One can argue against these methods of struggle, but the argument cited by *Iskra* reveals a confusion of concepts that is highly characteristic of them: with propaganda, where you are elucidating events, you can and should speak about the general basis on which certain individual facts emerged; but you usually have to fight separate concrete phenomena. Undoubtedly, one can frequently discover the rot of the entire state system hidden behind some individual fact or other, just as dissatisfaction with the whole of this system is frequently hidden behind isolated clashes. Therefore the Party should always lay bare those general causes which provoke isolated clashes and – wherever this is possible – fan the spark into a conflagration. But if the Party not only elucidates the natural course of things, but in addition takes the initiative in events, then it should remember the opposite, that everywhere a flame *starts* with a spark, with an isolated struggle. The proverb 'Moscow was burned down with a penny candle' is applicable

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17 S.N. 1901a This article deals with the trial of nine Polish workers, including members of the Polish Socialist Party, who killed two informers for reporting to the authorities their activities among factory and mine workers, along with the fact of their membership of the Party. They were tried by military court. The author of the article questions the constitutionality of both the court itself and the sentencing of one of the accused to exile for life. At the same time he argues against killing government agents on tactical grounds, instead supporting the construction of a revolutionary organisation whose membership is trained to identify and neutralise the activities of these agents prior to damage being done. The article goes on to express sympathy for the convicted activists, who are presented as victims in a battle between the government and the revolutionary movement that is inevitable in an autocracy.

to all revolutions. No revolution will ever start with the people gathering in the streets and demanding the overthrow of the autocracy. On the contrary, every great social disturbance has started – and will always start – as a result of some *isolated* clash in which private or group interests were strongly affected, as a result of an isolated incident in which the moral feeling of society was insulted through the treatment of some individual and so on. And the isolated incident which provokes a great event is always preceded by a long process of molecular ferment, accompanied by a mass of petty clashes over issues that are different, though with a common background. Therefore, the agitation tactics of the Party should consist in attracting the masses to a struggle against such phenomena and in gradually broadening and deepening this struggle and in addition, finally, in elucidating the general idea of this struggle without fail. We ourselves do not think that this ABC is unknown to *Iskra*: but it focused all its attention on the task of propaganda – consciously and from the very beginning.

However, events which quickly followed the appearance of *Iskra* urgently demanded an indication from it about the correct way to act. Thus, in the third issue of *Iskra*, Vera Zasulich's article, 'Regarding Current Events' appears, which very advantageously distinguishes itself from the general run of the *Iskra* mill owing to a great breadth of view, thanks to which it is not filled with revolutionary fatalism, but with a cheerful faith in the morally creative power of society.<sup>18</sup> 'The final decisive moment of liberation', we read here, 'is becoming inevitable in consequence of the developing activity and energy of society, its will to be free, despite all obstacles'.<sup>19</sup> The author of the article argues that this final liberation is prepared by an increase among the mass of the population of sectional resistance against prohibitions which fetter the individual: 'In the cause of destroying the barriers to political consciousness and political unification which are created by the government, there are no trivialities . . . in everything, every step, every action is as necessary as every drop of blood that circulates in the veins is for the life of an organism'.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Zasulich 1901. Zasulich's article deals with unrest among university students and the use of emergency measures, the 'Temporary Regulations' of July 1899, against them. The latter banned peaceful student assemblies, which were broken up with vast displays of military force. Those convicted of participating could be drafted into the army as punishment. Zasulich rejects terrorism as a response to this situation, in so far it relies on the activity and self-sacrifice of a 'handful of heroes' rather than the conscious political activity of the masses. As an alternative, she advocates the use of mass civil-disobedience tactics as a means of defeating bans and proscriptions.

19 Zasulich 1901, p. 7.

20 Ibid.

This article pays its dues to 'the struggle with individual phenomena'. What is said in this article is completely true, but unfortunately there is no space for what is most essential. Only negative struggle is mentioned, 'the resistance to prohibitions, the destruction of obstacles'. But in order to feel the unpleasantness of prohibitions, it is necessary to add something on the plus side. The resistance of the Kiev students to the forced dispersal of a meeting was provoked by the fact that the students wanted to get rid of a professor who wanted to take measures against the lowering of the moral level of student life, and to this end they actually held a meeting.<sup>21</sup> In the very same way, the resistance of workers to police arbitrariness is entirely provoked by the active struggle of workers with the owners, which hinders the obstacle of arbitrary police behaviour. We do not find anything about this positive struggle in the article of Vera Zasulich now under discussion, nor in any other *Iskra* article. But this in itself does not amount to much. 'Resistance to prohibition' itself, under the conditions of Russian political life, fully takes on the form of positive revolutionary struggle.

The author of the article argues that the more frequent occurrence of isolated resistance will gradually lead to the delivery of the population from bondage. The negative tactics of resistance suggested by the author would be sufficient if the gradual liberation of society taking place were not only moral, but juridical. But this is impossible in an autocratic country. The autocratic government, which does not wish to recognise precedent, makes use of every local or temporary weakening of public energy in order to construct more 'obstacles' than the number destroyed. Thus, under conditions involving the general growth of the revolutionary mood in Russia, sharp, violent clashes with the government will all the more often occur, so long as a sufficiently broad impulse attracting all the discontented elements does not disorganise the government and does not make it capitulate. It is therefore clear that, alongside the tactic of 'negative' resistance, one should acknowledge an ongoing positive struggle which at a certain moment will take on a forcible character. Life itself compelled *Iskra* to introduce this amendment. If *Iskra*, in its issues of December through to the February and March events, exhibited the abstract position that the Party should not fight with individual phenomena, then it began to speak *post factum* in a completely different language, in the April issue: 'With such organisation as there could have been during this demonstration', we read there, 'there could have been an act of revolutionary violence against, let us say, government buildings or the obscurantist press in response to every arbitrary

21 The incident referred to here is discussed in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 414–19. A more detailed account of the Kiev events of late 1900 appears in S.N. 1901c.



and violent act of the authorities'.<sup>22</sup> In the very same issue, *Iskra* descends on the St. Petersburg Social Democrats 'infected with Bernsteinianism', thanks to the inactivity of which the Kazan Square demonstration was turned into 'a simple battering of the people' instead of a 'battle with the people'.<sup>23</sup>

It seemed that we already knew exactly what to do. By the way, there came a time when it was necessary to apply this theory to reality. Immediately after the March events, the whole of Russia began to prepare for a general political demonstration in May. It was not difficult to foresee that the government would also prepare for it. Predicting the immediate results of the expected clash was impossible. Only the following was well-known: all the experience of the revolutionary movement in Russia showed that the autocratic government was in essence incapable of crushing the broad social movement with bloody measures; the revolutionary upsurge collapsed only because its internal forces had not yet ripened; it collapsed – not defeated, but exhausted. Consequently, any temporary triumph of the revolution, even if it gives way to a two-fold reaction, is a moral victory feeding the revolutionary tradition and was worth every risk when such a victory is foreseen. On this basis, the Union of Russia Social Democrats decided to come to the aid of the Russian committees at their hour of need, when the mood has still not died down. It published and delivered a proclamation to the committees calling on workers to resist the pre-May Day mass arrests with street demonstrations, whilst calling for them to answer violence with violence. The proclamation could, of course, have proven to be out of date given the quick march of events, thus failing to find an echo, and it may not have hit the right note. But it was not distributed directly from abroad, and not through our own Union 'agents', but through the local committees and with their agreement, and its non-distribution depended on the latter. It would seem that there is an absolute correspondence between that which, in the opinion of *Iskra*, 'should have been' done and that which the Union actually did.

And what of it? In the fourth issue of *Iskra* we suddenly read the following tirade: 'And if – and we do not doubt this – the disorganisation of our forces at the present moment demands *extreme care* in the invitation of the masses to demonstrate *at all costs*, at the precise time when our enemy has organised and readied itself, then in such a situation, a light-minded appeal *from abroad* "to liberate the arrested!", to "answer violence with violence" and every "bloody"

<sup>22</sup> *Iskra* No. 3. The passage cited has not been located.

<sup>23</sup> Lepeshinskii 1901. The lines appear in a detailed report from St. Petersburg concerning the February and March 1901 student demonstrations against the 'Temporary Regulations'.

speech can have the consequence of compromising Social Democracy and of heaping responsibility on it for a terrible slaughter of the workers'.<sup>24</sup>

Though we are interested in the literary physiognomy of *Iskra*, we will not expand here on those 'equivocations' which do not have any relation to the literature, such as the hint about the 'appeal from abroad' or the rebuke of *provoking* slaughter by calling for an answer to violence with violence. Against all expectations a newspaper, having set itself the goal of revolutionising the movement, recommends 'extreme care' and moderation precisely at a moment of *extreme* exertion in struggle!

But can we not find in *Iskra* some other indication as to the circumstances and conditions under which a call to demonstrations and to struggle can be considered expedient and successful? Fortunately, there are such indications. Speaking of the reasons for the failure of the 4 March demonstration,<sup>25</sup> *Iskra* points out that the participants could have been in a battle rather than a slaughter if it had been organised, if 'they had organised local demonstrations in order to distract the police and partially *so as not to leave those who could not get onto Kazan Square unoccupied*'.<sup>26</sup> We will not say much about the strategic method of distracting the police. The most superficial familiarity with our 'system of clamping down' is required to understand that this method would also lead to workers being battered: if the government decides not to shoot at a great crowd made up of people of various degrees and ranks gathered in the middle of the capital, then this is not owing to the inadequacies of the police and the military but from a fear of provoking a general wave of indignation going right up to the very layers of society that serve as support for the autocracy. They behave with much less ceremony towards workers' demonstrations in the suburbs. Such demonstrations are capable not so much of distracting the police as attracting bullets: this can now be confirmed by the workers of

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24 S.N. 1901e. This article is a response to the leading article, 'A Historic Turn', in *Listok Rabochego Dela* No. 6.

25 This was the demonstration in Kazan Square, St. Petersburg, of 4 March o.s. in which students gathered to protest against the 'Temporary Regulations' and which was broken up by the police. *Iskra* reported the number killed in this action as between five and eight, with over one thousand arrested (Lepeshinskii 1901, p. 3). Estimates of the number of participants range from three to fifteen thousand, the variation being partially accounted for by the timing and location of the protest (outside Kazan Cathedral on a Sunday), which may have made it hard to distinguish demonstrators from churchgoers and other members of the public.

26 Lepeshinskii 1901, p. 5. See note 391.

the Obukhov factory.<sup>27</sup> But more interesting than this strategic mistake is the other motive cited by *Iskra*: organising demonstrations in the workers' districts so that the workers there are not left unoccupied. Is this not called organising demonstrations 'at all costs'? Is this not called light-minded provocation of slaughter?

By the way, we should not be too strict with *Iskra*: it did not appeal to these demonstrations, it only said that they *ought to have* organised if there had been organisation, and then merely rebuked the St. Petersburg Social Democrats, who are 'infected with Bernsteinianism', for the fact that they did not act...

But can anybody track down an example of a call to demonstrations which in the presence of organisation, *Iskra* could acknowledge as a success which would not discredit the Party? There is such an example. Regarding the establishment of a military court to try our Polish comrades, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* distributed a leaflet, with a print run of fourteen thousand, in numerous towns with the following appeal: '1) Organise strikes and demand the abolition of military and extraordinary courts and a review of the Sviderskii<sup>28</sup> case by a jury; 2) Convoke big meetings for the composition of a protest and in order to grant the the Party committees permission to speak in your name'.<sup>29</sup>

We are not convinced that this leaflet was unsuccessfully composed or that it should not have been distributed. We will only note a fact that is also well-known to *Iskra*: nowhere did workers respond decisively to this appeal. No strike was organised anywhere, nor a single protest meeting. And, knowing this result, *Iskra* writes in its first issue: 'Let the successful experience of the distribution of this leaflet serve as an encouraging (!) example to all comrades'. How on earth are we to understand this? How are we to make sense of such a labyrinth of contradictions?

If we go deeper into these contradictions, it turns out that they have their logic. *Iskra* reckons the fact of a distribution of an appeal to action, which is followed by no actual action, to be 'encouraging'. And this is not surprising:

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27 This was a St. Petersburg steel works specialising in the production of artillery pieces for the navy. A series of strikes in the spring of 1901 took place and a Social-Democratic circle operated at the enterprise. A demonstration on 7 May 1901 O.S. outside the plant was attacked by police and troops. A commentary on these events is to be found in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 25–30 ('Another Massacre'), in which the author celebrates the physical resistance put up by the workers and defends the tactics of street fighting, arguing that it is possible for workers to defeat troops in such contests.

28 This refers to the Polish socialists who killed two informers, the leader of whom was named Sviderskii. See note 17 for details.

29 The text of this proclamation is reproduced in full along with a brief, approving editorial comment in *Iskra* No. 1, p. 4.

for them, attracting the masses to political struggle *at the present time* is not as important as is issuing political leaflets, just as in relation to the past activity of the Social Democracy, it turned its attention mainly to the literature of the 'economic' tendency rather than to the economic struggle itself: 'We have accustomed workers in all corners of Russia to leaflets of a local economic character (but not to struggle?); we read in the first issue of *Iskra*. 'We are now obliged to direct all our energies towards the foundation of an organisation for the distribution of leaflets with a political content throughout Russia... calling the people as a whole to a liberation struggle'.<sup>30</sup>

For *Iskra* – at least for the moment – the task of propaganda has pushed the task of agitation into the background. The assimilation of the correct theory of class struggle is much more important for it than fighting *praxis* and a fighting tradition. From this perspective, it is not able to evaluate the revolutionary significance that the economic struggle of the proletariat should inevitably be given under Russian conditions. It underestimates how much this struggle has established close moral links between workers and students; it underestimates how much this struggle developed workers' political ideas and their revolutionary spirit; how much this struggle has influenced the general political atmosphere in Russia; the fact that the fighting spirit of workers had percolated by secret roads into the various layers of the ordinary people right up to the Moscow stall holders, and that it has inspired the revolutionary hopes of the young – this fact has escaped them. Therefore it sounded the alarm over the threatened legalisation of the workers' movement, the danger of its degeneration into professionalism, right on the eve of an explosion of mass political discontent which had up to that point been unheard of in Russia. When life itself refuted its fears and apprehensions – when the February and March events broke out – *Iskra* decided that it was so much the worse for real life if it deviated from theory, and it preserved its dogmatic position with unwavering hardness. It knows that in theory 'revolutions cannot be made, they have to happen' (see *Iskra* No. 3 'Regarding Current Events');<sup>31</sup> it knows in theory that the autocracy has a mass of 'hidden enemies' in different layers of the population who will not be accounted for prior to the revolution, so that it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not the moment has arrived. Finally, even if we could determine this, and if it were possible to expect nothing more than a great moral defeat for the autocracy at the present moment, even this would bring us significantly closer to final victory. Therefore it is clear that *we must strike whilst the iron is hot*, and that the Social Democracy should not reject any

30 See previous note.

31 Zasulich 1901, p. 7.

means at this decisive moment. Nevertheless, *Iskra* is so much spellbound by a narrow dogma that, when the 'stormy month' began, it overlooked its 'qualitative' distinction from the historical run-of-the-mill, and instead of directing all its efforts towards supporting the struggle with the autocracy that was under way, it directed all efforts towards the defence of dogma from the pernicious influence of reality: for it, the stormy events in Russia served mainly as material for a polemic with those not in agreement with it, which sought to prove how blind the 'Economists' and 'Bernsteinians' were, to prove how these events would have unfolded *if* we did not have Bernsteinians, how dangerous a fascination with 'People's Will' tactics under the influence of these events is, and how light-minded it is to conduct revolutionary action in the absence of a revolutionary plan, and so on.

As regards *Iskra's* submitting of our political system to merciless criticism, in so far as it dispels every kind of 'senseless illusion' regarding the compatibility of different 'freedoms' and 'worthy enterprises' with the autocracy, in other words, in so far as it pursues the task of propaganda, *Iskra* has, in a word, indisputable merit.

But in as much as it tries to force all the complex forms of revolutionary struggle into the Procrustean bed<sup>32</sup> of its all-too-narrow dogma, it immediately deadens enthusiasm, paralyses initiative and impermissibly narrows the scope of revolutionary influence. If *Iskra* were to continue to conduct itself in this way, it would probably have firm successes amongst a certain circle of opposition readers, but it would not have success among revolutionary activists.

One can see how much narrow dogmatism deadens the feelings of *Iskra* itself through the following example. 'In principle we have never rejected and can never reject terror', we read in *Iskra* No.4 ('Where To Begin?');<sup>33</sup> but we reject it in the capacity of a 'stand-alone' tactic, as something which is incompatible with the fundamentals of our tactics. Accordingly, *Iskra* No. 1, establishes its attitude to terror: 'If, as can be expected, terrorist struggle will develop alongside the growing oppression and arbitrary behaviour of the government,

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32 In Greek mythology, Procrustes was the bandit son of Poseidon, who offered travellers a bed for the night that was either too long or too short for them. Whilst they were asleep, he would either amputate the 'excess length' of the traveller, or 'stretch' him so that he fitted the bed. He was finally tricked and killed by Theseus using this same method. The term is now sometimes used to refer to the imposition of an arbitrary standard without regard for individual differences.

33 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 19. The words which follow ('but we reject it in the capacity of a "stand-alone" tactic, something which is incompatible with the fundamentals of our tactics') do not appear in this article.

then let every fact from this area meet with the protest of the whole fighting proletariat'.<sup>34</sup> This theory is entirely correct. But look how the dogmatists realise their theory, look at how they protest. Elsewhere, *Iskra* writes the following on the military court that was imposed on the Polish comrades:

We are not able to consider them *criminals*. (!) For us, they are victims of the current vile order and all our sympathy is on the side of those giving up their lives, and so forth. And we should do everything to avoid letting this vile system *do in its victims completely* . . . We should *demand* (!) that the life of a spy is only used as a *legal guarantee* (!) which protects the life of every commoner.<sup>35</sup>

So, rather than demanding the legal defence of the commoner from the spy, we should demand the equation of the spy's guarantee of life with a commoner's guarantee of life. And as for our comrades who defend themselves against spies with their own weapons, we should merely demand that they 'don't do them in completely'.<sup>36</sup> By means of this dispassionate attitude to the clash between revolutionaries and spies, *Iskra* conceives of provoking 'the protest of all fighting workers' on behalf of the Polish comrades! All this because our Polish comrades are apostates from tactics!

Concerning themselves exclusively with the development of the revolutionary *understanding* of life, arguing in every manner that the objective historical process will lead to the bankruptcy of the autocracy, *Iskra* at the same time keeps a vigilant watch to ensure that the *influence* possible in the current situation does not lead this process away from the straight and narrow. Owing to its vantage point, *Iskra* reacts too weakly to the ongoing struggle, in particular to the struggle of the proletariat. But despite this restraint in practical questions or, more probably, as a consequence of it, *Iskra* falls too easily into revolutionary romanticism when what is at stake is not the present, but the future.

Take, for example, its attitude to 'another massacre' at the Obukhov factory.<sup>37</sup>

There was a moment when the Russian commoner grew in his own eyes just as much as the powers that be were losing their heads. The workers in

34 S.N. 1901a.

35 All the italics are ours (Martynov's footnote). [S.N. 1901a].

36 In the original, '*okochatel'no ne dokanal'i*'. This menacing language seems to refer to the practice of holding unmasked spies and provocateurs as hostages, whose liberty could be traded for that of arrested revolutionaries. On this basis, *Iskra* appears to be arguing against them being killed when discovered,

37 See footnote 27 of this chapter.

all the great centres were simply dying to fight, and had actually entered into hand-to-hand skirmishes with the police without any appeal from outside. Corresponding to this manifest mood of the masses, it was naturally in the expectation of government reprisals that the call to the masses to answer violence with violence was made. To answer violence with violence at that moment seemed possible not because the workers were capable of standing up to the Russian armed forces, but because in view of the general mood, the demoralised and morally discredited autocratic government did not, and could not, dare to initiate *military action in the proper sense* against the people (see the foreword to 'The Trial of Karpovich and Lagovskii');<sup>38</sup> the government could not even be certain that a split would not emerge in its own camp if it had to resort to real military dictatorship – a fear confirmed by a whole range of factors.

For that moment of confusion on the part of the authorities, *Iskra* recommended 'extreme care'.<sup>39</sup> Conversely, since the slaughter at the Obukhov factory, when the workers themselves answered violence with violence, a fantastic picture of the future has begun to form in the revolutionary imagination of *Iskra*.

'Recently', we read:

much has been spoken about the fact that street battles against modern troops are impossible; especially insistent about this are those critical know-it-alls who have presented the old rubbish of bourgeois erudition as the new conclusions of objective science, distorting the words of Engels in the process... During the skirmish of 7 May, the workers had nothing but stones and, of course, the ban of the town governor will not hinder them next time when it comes to making stores of other weapons... The workers were unprepared and there were all of three and a half thousand of them; nonetheless they repelled several hundred unmounted constables...<sup>40</sup>

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38 The translator has not been able to locate this pamphlet.

39 *Iskra*, by the way, did not stay in character. It also issued a proclamation calling for 'lamps to be put out' on Coronation Day. This, if welcome, was a much more dangerous *answer* to violence because this is an independent attack, which insults the tsar directly. But we will not argue – it all the same proved to be a cautious step, because calling for a direct insult to his highness still does not get an echo and therefore will have entirely innocent consequences [Martynov's footnote].

40 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 29.



In order to cool down *Iskra's* imagination, we will remind it of that time when autocratic power, surrounded by an entirely subservient *milieu*, had the capacity to act decisively – we recall the sad memory of grapeshot against the 14 December uprising.<sup>41</sup> *Iskra*, in the ardency of its imagination, forgets about the power of grapeshot. We do not place our hopes in the powerlessness of a millions-strong army and their weapons, only in the possible powerlessness of an autocratic government to use this army. Only thanks to an entirely well-founded indecisiveness on the part of an autocratic power, hated by everybody at the time of a broad movement, did the Riga disorders, for example, send it into such a panic. Thanks to this, the Obukhov disorders also brought about an extraordinary panic in the highest circles, as we have already been told...

The article, 'Another Massacre',<sup>42</sup> is not the only example of a method of war using Draconian threats that has been adopted by *Iskra*. It too easily imagines a passage from revolutionary exposure to the most extreme revolutionary action, once it is a question of the distant future. For example, in *Iskra* No. 1, when speaking of the necessity of fighting provocation not with terror but with the 'boycotting and harassment of spies', *Iskra*, feeling the weakness of its antidote, offers us consolation: 'We will be hoping that Zubatov waits until that time when, in the light of an open struggle for freedom, the people will hang him from one of Moscow's lampposts'.<sup>43</sup> We agree that it is now difficult to find effective means of struggle against espionage. But the words of *Iskra* are small consolation to us. In the light of an open struggle for freedom, the death of Zubatov is really only needed to satisfy the bloodthirsty instincts of a mob.

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41 The 'Decembrist' revolt took place on 14 December 1825 O.S. in an attempt to prevent Nicholas I (1796–1855) assuming the throne following his elder brother Constantine's refusal to take the position on the death of their father, Alexander I (1777–1825, reigned from 1801). A liberal conspiracy among army officers tried to exploit the confusion, making use of the fact that the Imperial Guards had sworn allegiance to Constantine. This led to a stand-off in the centre of St. Petersburg in which three thousand troops, a small minority of those stationed in the capital, refused to swear allegiance to the new tsar. These were eventually dispersed with artillery fire. A new rebellion was attempted the following month in the south of Russia, but this too was suppressed by in a military action notable for its effective use of grapeshot, ball-bearing like objects packed into canvas bags which break when fired, producing an effect not unlike shrapnel. The organisation behind these events, the 'Union of Salvation', also known as the 'Society of True and Loyal Sons of the Fatherland', was in favour of a constitutional monarchy and the abolition of serfdom.

42 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 25–30.

43 S.N. 1901b.

Such promises are more likely to console Zubatov rather than the revolutionaries he persecutes right now, not in the light of open struggle, but in autocratic darkness.<sup>44</sup>

The romanticism of *Iskra* noted by us is very clearly shown in one unexpected 'passage' in the draft of the agrarian programme that is presented to us in No. 3, in the article 'The Workers' Party and the Peasantry'.<sup>45</sup> In our opinion, romanticism is again expressed here, because the attachment of the peasant masses to our movement appears to be highly problematical under present conditions. In view of the fact that the agrarian programme will for a long time have a relatively small practical significance, it opens up an entirely new field for revolutionary phraseology.<sup>46</sup>

This said, in the article discussed, the principle according to which the Social Democracy should be governed in its dealings with the peasant question is correctly indicated: 'Trying to save the peasantry with a defence of small farms and small property from the onslaught of capitalism would signify a useless retardation of social development, a deceiving of the peasant with the illusion of possible well-being and a division of the labouring classes, creating for the minority a privileged position in relation to the majority'.<sup>47</sup>

From this, of course, it does not follow that the Social Democracy should be indifferent to the peasantry. As a *political* party, it cannot lose sight of that great

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44 In No. 7, which has only just been issued, *Iskra* continues to frighten us with 'Draconian threats': 'Answer the question: how much blood will the future Russian revolution have to spill so that an ordinary citizen can have the firm right to make merry?' ... 'And we once again pose the question: how many Sipiagins will the future Russian revolution string up from lamp-posts so that once and for all the right is won ... to freely command one's own human feelings'. 'Pictures of Russian Life', *Iskra* No. 7 [Martynov's footnote.] Dmitri Sergeevich Sipiagin (1853–1902) was the Minister of Interior. He was assassinated by an 'Essar' only a few months after this article was published.

45 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4. pp. 420–8.

46 In the very same *Iskra* No. 7, which we received when our article had already been sent to press, there is a highly characteristic chronicle, 'From the Countryside'. In this chronicle, typical, immemorially-repeated facts about rural disorder and agitation are presented, including an eternal 'retired soldier' who unearths an old document (probably a record book about resettlements), a petition to the 'little father tsar', a sham order from the tsar and the 'riot on the knees' ('the peasants lay on the ground and with this passive resistance did not allow work to start'). And these are the facts which 'illustrate the process of the liberation of the countryside from a centuries-old hypnosis' in the opinion of *Iskra*. From such facts, *Iskra* draws the conclusion: 'Now this little village has at last lost faith in the civil service and the tsar's truth'. Blessed are those who believe ... [Martynov's footnote].

47 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, p. 422.

mass of the population which serves as the bulwark of political reaction; in this sense its task is, if not to revolutionise the peasantry, then at least to neutralise it. On the other hand, as a *socialist* party, it cannot adopt an indifferent attitude towards the impoverishment and degeneration of this millions-strong labouring population. Accordingly, consistent Social Democrats can only be guided by those general principles which Kautsky (with whom – as is clear from the article – *Iskra* agrees) developed in his study of the agrarian question. In so far as we mention the peasantry, we should demand their protection from fiscal exploitation as petty proprietors, protection from various backward forms of economic debt-servitude and from legal persecution, without obstructing the progress of capitalist agriculture in the process. The question is one of how to adapt these principles to Russia. *Iskra* correctly points out that one of the main causes of the present distress of the peasantry consists in the fact that the government liberated them not with the land but 'from the land'.<sup>48</sup> Of course, this fact can, and should, serve as an excellent opportunity for political propaganda among the peasants. But *Iskra* makes a quite unexpected jump from the area of propaganda into that of agitation. The autocratic government carried out a great historical injustice 40 years ago – a fact that is favourable to propaganda. This same fact, according to *Iskra*, should lie at the basis of agitation among the peasants, it should lie at the basis of the contemporary agrarian demands of the Social Democrats. The Social Democrats should now demand the correction of this historical mistake: 'We put forward the demand of establishing peasant committees for the rectification of those scandalous injustices that were done to liberated slaves by the gentry committees established by the tsarist authorities. . . . We put forward the demand of returning to the peasants those cut-off lands by means of which forced labour, debt-servitude and *corvée*, the same things as serf-labour in reality, persist'.<sup>49</sup>

We suggest that the extent to which the cards have been reshuffled since the time of the liberation, in other words how many of the gentry's cut-off strips have passed into the hands of entrepreneurs of various ranks, is not unknown to *Iskra*. It is not unknown to *Iskra* how difficult it now is to draw a line between the typical figure of a landowner running a farm on the basis of debt-servitude and an entrepreneur running one on a capitalist basis; it knows how many farmers who have adopted model methods there now are among landowners and, on the other hand, how many of the new class of farmers live exclusively by a debt-servitude which has nothing in common with capitalist production. One might ask where the committees planned by *Iskra* will look for the cut-off

48 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, p. 420.

49 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 4, pp. 424–5.

strips that were in the hands of the gentry 40 years ago. Will they now initiate lawsuits against ruined gentry bloodlines or, perhaps, will they search for these strips among the new class who received them after they had passed through 10 hands during the period and expropriate them?

Of course, it would be a very strange form of expropriation. It would be strange to take away from the new class land which passed into their hands from the gentry, whilst leaving land which they stole directly from the peasants, and which they also use exclusively for the enslavement of these peasants, in their hands. But the main question is that of how, given this type of exploitation, to avoid affecting capitalist agriculture. How will it be with those cut-off strips which are in the hands of either the landowners, or in the hands of the new class that bought them up, and which are now being exploited with model-capitalist methods? *Iskra* proposes a re-liberation of the peasants after a delay of 40 years, not reckoning either with the profound economic changes which have taken place during this time, or with the basic principles of the Social-Democratic programme. It is searching for a powerful fighting slogan for the struggle of the peasantry with a government that steals from it, but this is an attempt with defective means: if we wanted to find a real class slogan for the mass of the land-poor peasantry, we should have gone further, we should have adopted the demand of black redistribution, but then we would have to say goodbye to the Social-Democratic programme. The very same compromise proposed by *Iskra* is completely unworkable in practice and is tactically inexpedient. It testifies only to the all-too-great force of abstraction ... from reality.

In contrast to *Iskra*, we consistently place the revolutionisation of life before the revolutionisation of dogma. Those who would see in this the wish to give predominance to practice over theory, or even a wish to juxtapose practice to theory, would badly misunderstand us. We know perfectly well that, in order for it to be successful, the practical activity of the Party should rely on a strictly consistent programme, on firm theoretical principles. But in order for these principles to be a buttress for practice, they should give practical struggle the place it deserves. *Iskra* has a tendency to belittle the significance of the onward march of the grey, everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas, though they are two closely linked sides of one and the same great cause, and *Iskra* has crowned this tendency with a plan for the organisation of the Party, which it proposed in its fourth issue, in the article 'Where To Begin?'

First of all, the heading of the article is itself characteristic. 'Choosing a direction', according to the author, 'was already correctly done by the end of

the eighties and the beginning of the nineties'.<sup>50</sup> As regards a system and plan of practical activity, 'it is necessary to start from the beginning'.<sup>51</sup> According to the whole idea of the article, the entire practical Social-Democratic movement, from the middle of the 1890s to the present day, cannot be taken into account, and if the plan of *Iskra* was put into practice, it would lead to the destruction of all traces of our RSDLP. The author of the article argues that it is necessary to start matters with the foundation in Russia of a central political press organ. This is unquestionably important. Furthermore, in the description of the literary tasks of this organ, it is clear that they should entirely correspond with the tasks *Iskra* has set itself. And we can fully agree with these in so far as it is a question of the setting of tasks and not of their being carried out. Generally, in so far as the author argues for the necessity of regulating and uniting political propaganda sent to Russia by means of a central press organ, it is impossible to disagree with him. But the author does not stop at this:

The role of a newspaper is not limited, however, simply to the dissemination of ideas, to political education and to the attraction of political allies. The newspaper is not only a collective propagandist, it is a *collective agitator and also a collective organiser*... With the help of the newspaper and in connection with it, a permanent organisation will be formed of its own accord... Even technical tasks alone – securing the timely supply of material for the newspaper and its timely distribution – compel the creation of a network of local agents representing a united Party... *This network of agents will be the framework of precisely that kind of organisation we need.*<sup>52</sup>

Thus the newspaper not only involves the functions of the Central Committee of the Party and is not placed under the control of the Party. On the contrary it, by decree so to speak, appoints the Party in the form of a network of agents or, put more simply, handymen. The propagandistic organ becomes

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50 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 17. This is a slightly hostile paraphrase of Lenin's words and the latter does not actually refer to the 'correctness' of the path chosen, only to the fact that the debate has moved on from questions relating to the programme to those of tactics. This is not to say that Lenin did not think the 'correct path' (Marxism as opposed to Populism) had been chosen. However, the dogmatic tone given to the statement by Martynov is absent from the original.

51 These, or similar, words do not actually appear in Lenin's article.

52 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 22–3.

the uncontrollable, autocratic legislator of all revolutionary activity. What on earth happened to all the committees of the Party who managed, despite all their pioneers' political immaturity, to stir up a great mass of workers over the course of several years – that underground activity to which the events of February and March are to a significant extent indebted? Out of politeness, *Iskra* does not forget about these committees: it refers them 'from the text to the footnotes', but so that they do not start to form a high opinion about themselves 'in the notes', it calls them 'groups and circles' in parentheses.<sup>53</sup> In truth one must have great faith in the power of words and in the fact that it is you who possesses the 'true word' in order to substitute an organisation for the dissemination of the ideas of one newspaper, such as, for example, *Iskra*, for the 'organisation of the Social-Democratic Party'.

*Pendant*<sup>54</sup> to this plan, we will recall one fact from the history of the German Social Democracy, communicated by Auer at its Mainz Congress.<sup>55</sup> When the old Lassallean, Tölcke,<sup>56</sup> proposed the first steps in the unification of the Lassalleans and the Eisenachers, Marx and Engels declared from London that the efforts of Tölcke were the work of the Prussian police. Then, Liebknecht spoke some decisive words which shot through the Party like lightning and made Marx and Engels withdraw theirs: 'In all principled questions we are unconditionally guided by our theoretical leaders Marx and Engels, but we who live and are active in Germany and who know its conditions will decide

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53 In Lenin's article (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 23), the following footnote is appended to the phrase 'network of agents': 'It will of course be understood that these agents could only work successfully in closest contact with the local committees (groups, study circles) of our Party. Taken as a whole, the plan we envisage can, of course, only be implemented with the most active support of the committees which have on repeated occasions attempted to unite the Party and which, we are sure, will achieve this unification – if not today, then tomorrow, if not in one way, then in another'. Martynov here seems to be suggesting that, by referring to the official bodies of the RSDLP in such a note and not in the main body of the article, Lenin is expressing a view regarding their importance relative to the aforementioned 'network of agents'.

54 Italicised and in Roman characters in the original. The word's origin and precise meaning is not clear to the translator.

55 Ignaz Auer (1846–1907) was a worker who more than once served the German Social Democracy as a deputy in the Reichstag. He was sympathetic to Bernstein during the revisionist controversy. The Mainz Congress of the SPD took place in 1900.

56 Carl Tölcke (1817–93) was a prominent member of the Lassallean General German Workers' Association, and served briefly as its President. In 1875, the Association merged with the Marxist German Social-Democratic Workers Party at the Gotha Congress, a development met with scepticism by Marx and Engels and which resulted in Marx's famous *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 24, pp. 75–99).

all practical questions'. That is how the German Party related to the interference of its great theoreticians *in only one case*. How should our Party regard its *complete* submission to an autonomous Editorial Board, which might possess the impatience of Marx's genius but, of course, not the genius of this impatient man?

• • •

We have finished our cursory critical survey of *Iskra*.

It is acknowledged that we entered into this polemic with great unwillingness, not because we especially value literary meekness but because in essence there should not have been a polemic with *Iskra*.

If we step back from those far-removed philosophical disagreements which are reflected in our practical views, it turns out that there are not two different and incompatible Party programmes separating us from *Iskra*, but two different but entirely compatible positions on collective work.

Independent of what *Iskra* wanted or wants to be, it is *actually* an organ of the revolutionary opposition which exposes our system, and predominantly our political system, in so far as it clashes with the interests of the most diverse layers of the population.

We ourselves work, and will continue to work, for the workers' cause in close organic connection with the proletariat's struggle. Narrowing the sphere of our influence, we will all the more reinforce that same influence. As representatives of the Workers' Party, we cannot limit ourselves to the mere exposure of systems, an unrewarding means for its development. We should also respond to the most immediate and current interests of the proletariat.

The liberation of the people from every type of fetter and the liberation of Russia from intolerable autocratic oppression are the distant and most immediate goals which are equally dear to us and to *Iskra*, and which we can both serve in our own way, without clashing with one another.

But in order that these clashes, which are very harmful to the movement, do not occur, it is necessary that *Iskra* reject the one-sided views which state that its own position is the only legitimate one and that whoever is not with it is against it.

And we hope that the powerful demand of reality will make it reject these opinions and make it enter the Party organically, not setting itself against it as a higher inspectorate.



## Constitution of the ‘Russian *Iskra* Organisation’

*Given the lengthy polemical articles printed in Rabochee Delo No. 10, it is perhaps not surprising that the ‘Unification Conference’ of 4–5 October did not yield a united RSDLP organisation in the emigration. Instead, all the consistently pro-Iskra groupings: the ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group, the Revolutionary Organisation ‘Social Democrat’, and a couple of circles providing technical support to the newspaper declared themselves to have merged into a common organisation, the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad, which was henceforth to act as a rival to the Union Abroad.<sup>1</sup> An announcement in Iskra referring to the split noted the way in which the articles in Rabochee Delo No. 10 had broken with the manifesto agreed in June and characterised the journal as one whose line vacillated between ‘revolutionary socialism and an opportunism which plays into the hands of the liberals’.<sup>2</sup>*

*In consequence of this renewal of the split, the Union Abroad once again began agitating for a Second Congress of the RSDLP, and a certain amount of organising activity took place in Russia in pursuit of this aim. In January 1902, a Congress of organisations in the southern region was organised by Iuzhnyi Rabochii, the result being the foundation of a permanent regional organisation, complete with its own Central Committee and newspaper, Iuzhnyi Rabochii itself.<sup>3</sup> This ‘Union of Southern Committees and Organisations’ seems to have been modelled on the Bund and therefore expressed renewed support for a federal approach to Party organisation previously seen in the April 1900 Congress attempt, in which only ‘regional Central Committees’ rather than local committees would be represented at a future RSDLP Congress.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, plans for such a*

1 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 241–2.

2 See previous note.

3 See Ermanskii 1902. The Union was made up of the Odessa, Nikolaev, Ekaterinoslav, Kishinev, and Kharkov committees of the RSDLP, plus one additional group from Odessa.

4 This becomes apparent when we compare the draft resolutions of the organisers of the 1900 RSDLP Congress attempt to those taken by the Congress of the ‘Southern Union’. According to the former (see Chapter 5, the third draft resolution), the RSDLP was to be made up of a series of regional ‘Central Committees’ to which organisations in numerous small towns would be subordinated. Among other things, these ‘Central Committees’ were to produce regional newspapers, organise regional congresses and represent the subordinate organisations at RSDLP Congresses. This projected revision to the constitution approved at the First RSDLP Congress, in an evidently federalist direction, appears to have been echoed in the

Congress were agreed between Rabochee Delo, the new 'Southern Union' and the Bund, and in anticipation of it, Rabochee Delo revised and redrafted its programme, possibly in the hope of seeing it ratified as the Party's programme.<sup>5</sup>

These plans ultimately produced a poorly-attended meeting at Belostock in March 1902, which quickly abandoned any pretensions towards being an RSDLP Congress.<sup>6</sup> At the suggestion of a representative of the Iskra Editorial Board, the conference elected an Organising Committee made up of representatives of all the groups present, and which was given the responsibility of organising a more representative meeting.<sup>7</sup> Possibly in response to this disappointing outcome, which echoed the failure of April 1900, Rabochee Delo ceased publication at this point.

All the evidence suggests that Iskra was not closely involved in these plans and that it was rather more concerned with consolidating its own factional apparatus inside Russia prior to any new attempt at an RSDLP Congress, which it hoped to postpone to some undefined point in the future. Probably the most important step taken in this factional consolidation was a meeting held in Samara in January 1902, at which new structures and aims of the Iskra support organisation in Russia were established. Whilst there is plenty of evidence showing that, prior to this, numerous individual supporters of Iskra had gone into Russia aiming to establish links with the local RSDLP committees, and that others had established underground print shops and distribution networks around the country,<sup>8</sup> it seems that it was only with this meeting that plans for a general, co-ordinated campaign was established to capture as many RSDLP organisations as possible for the Iskra faction. This campaign would ultimately involve either driving the supporters of Rabochee Delo, Iuzhnyi Rabochii and other rival groups from the local committees or depriving them of influence in the local organisations of the RSDLP using some other method.

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resolutions of the Southern Union Congress of January 1902, in so far as a Central Committee of three individuals was elected along with an Editorial Board for *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, which was declared to be the Union's official newspaper.

5 See Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 268–76.

6 *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Sovetskogo Soiuz* 1970, pp. 40–4; Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 28.

7 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 28–9; Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 97–106; *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Sovetskogo Soiuz* 1970, pp. 40–1.

8 According to one source (Akse'rod and Martov 1924, p. 47), *Iskra* had nine agents working for it in Russia in the summer of 1901, two of whom were running an underground press in Kishinev, with others being based in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov, Odessa, Kiev and Vilno.

*The techniques to be employed in this factional warfare are stated quite clearly in the surviving part of a letter written by Zinaida Pavlovna Krzhizhanovskaia (1869–1948),<sup>9</sup> who was elected secretary of the ‘Russian Iskra organisation’<sup>10</sup> at the Samara Conference, addressed to the Editorial Board of Iskra. According to this letter, in which many of the resolutions of the meeting are described, Iskra supporters in Russia were first of all tasked with convincing local Social-Democratic committees of the correctness of their own views, as opposed to those of Rabochee Delo. On the strength of this persuasive effort, they were to seek public statements of support for the newspaper, funds and even the donation of personnel to the Iskra factional apparatus, presumably so that the faction fight might be taken to an ever expanding number of local organisations. Not only this, local groups convinced by Iskra’s politics were invited to merge with the Iskra faction, thus taking instructions from the Russian Iskra organisation’s Central Committee and throwing their energies into an ‘all-Russian’ factional campaign within the RSDLP, somewhat at the expense of purely local campaigns and local Social-Democratic newspapers.*

*It is evident from other sources that the campaign strategy described in this document was implemented with a certain degree of success, not least in the form of a significant number of local organisations who declared their support for Iskra becoming the RSDLP’s official newspaper prior to the Second Congress of the RSDLP.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, attempts to merge pre-existing RSDLP bodies with those created by the Russian Iskra organisation proved both difficult and controversial. For example, Iskra ‘captured’ the St. Petersburg Committee by June of 1902, and on this basis it directed some of the forces at the disposal of the committee towards ‘all-Russian’ work, specifically towards work on an ‘Organising Committee’ responsible for preparing the Second Congress of the RSDLP.<sup>12</sup> These departures weakened Iskra’s hold over St. Petersburg, the result*

9 Zinaida Pavlovna Krzhizhanovskaia-Nevzorova (1869–1948) joined the Union of Russian Social Democrats in 1894 as a chemistry student in St. Petersburg. She worked as a volunteer teacher in non-religious Sunday schools for adult workers, recruiting her most politically promising students to the Social Democrats. She was arrested and exiled. In 1899, she signed the *Protest by Russian Social Democrats* against Kuskova’s *Credo*. With her husband, Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovskii (1872–1959), she formed the administrative centre of the Russian *Iskra* organisation. She was subsequently a Bolshevik and worked after the revolution in the fields of pedagogy and child development.

10 The official title of this conspiratorial organisation is not clear from the documents connected to it, so for the purposes of this volume, the title ‘Russian *Iskra* Organisation’ will be used.

11 These announcements were printed in the *Iskra* newspaper. See the column ‘*Iz Partii*’ (‘From the Party’) in *Iskra* No. 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 35.

12 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 174–9.

*being a protracted faction fight at a local level, which was given added intensity owing to the fact that the local<sup>13</sup> Social-Democratic newspaper, Rabochaia Mysl', had for a long time been one of the main mouthpieces of 'Economism'. The Iskra supporters, in line with the policy agreed at Samara, wanted to discontinue this publication.*

*The tension created by these local conflicts led to certain Iskra supporters fearing that the strategy of the Russian Iskra organisation would soon precipitate an open split in the RSDLP as a whole, mirroring the developments which had earlier taken place in the emigration. Such fears contributed to the growth of an anti-Lenin sentiment within the Iskra faction, and probably more than any other factor bear responsibility for the split in the Iskra group, which occurred at the Second Congress of the RSDLP.<sup>14</sup> This said, there is no evidence that the strategy outlined in Krzhizhanovskaia's letter actually led to a complete organisational split in any particular locality with the exception of St. Petersburg, nor is there evidence that, in accordance with resolution 5 ii of the Samara Conference, Iskra supporters were reduced to forming their own separate local organisations as a result of hostility on the part of the 'official' ones. Thus, if Iskra was evidently capable of a hard inter-factional fight within the framework of a common Party, there is no evidence that it sought to split this Party with the aim of securing control over one part of it, as is sometimes alleged.<sup>15</sup>*

## **ZP Krzhizhanovskaia to the Editorial Board of *Iskra*** (12 February) 30 March 1902

*Samara*

We are awaiting answers to all the enquiries sent to you. For the moment I will bring to your attention the latest step in our activity. A meeting has taken place at which the following questions were raised for discussion:

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- 13 In fact, by this stage *Rabochaia Mysl'* was being published abroad, whilst nominally remaining the newspaper of the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle'.
  - 14 The documents in Chapter 12, Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 of the present collection seem to demonstrate this connection with particular clarity.
  - 15 Keep 1966, pp. 85–6.

- 1) the election of members of the Central Committee of *Iskra*;
  - 2) the distribution of roles;
  - 3) communication;
  - 4) funds;
  - 5) our attitude to local committees and groups;
  - 6) our attitude to local press organs;
  - 7) our attitude to congresses of committees.
- 
- 1) Sixteen members of a Central Committee were elected. I will send the names later, when I have the code to hand. Every member is charged with choosing a candidate to replace himself in case of arrest. The size of the Central Committee can be increased only with the consent and agreement of its entire membership.
  - 2) It was decided to split up and go to various places: two in the south, two in the central part of Russia, four in the east, two 'flying agents', one in the north. The role of the remaining members has still not been cleared up. A secretary of the Central Committee was elected along with an assistant.<sup>16</sup>
  - 3) Communication is to be carried out in two ways – by letter and through the flying agents. The secretary is required, on the basis of information sent to him during this period, to send out a fortnightly bulletin on the course of events to every member of the Central Committee and to the comrades living abroad; the latter will also keep an archive of all the reports. The flying agents and the remaining members of the Central Committee should inform the secretary of every change in their address. A wish was expressed to hold a Congress of members of the Central Committee in the coming year. A Congress in the spring was recognised to be a little premature.
  - 4) Funds. Every member is charged with the responsibility of organising collections. Part of the money is to be sent to *Iskra* and the secretary should be informed about what sum remains. All requests for funds should be sent to the secretary and he, having to hand information as to the state of finances as a whole, can raise the appropriate amount.

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16 Presumably Gleb and Zinaida Khrzhizhanovskaia. According to the editors of the *Leninskii Sbornik*, it was Khrzhizhanovskaia who was elected secretary (Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 8, p. 223).

- 5) Attitude to local committees. Every member of the Central Committee arriving at any particular place should strive to exert the greatest possible influence and should have as a final goal the affiliation of the local committee to the *Iskra* organisation and its recognition of *Iskra* as the Party press organ. To this end he: i) enters the local group as an individual, offering his services to it in terms of the provision of literature, newspapers, the printing of leaflets, public statements and the like; ii) if, despite all efforts, the committee remains hostile – he should form his own group and his own local committee.
  
- 6) Attitude to local press organs. Noting: i) the lack of literary forces and funds; ii) the instability of any tendency dependent on the chance composition of a local group; iii) the difficulties in maintaining and the irregular appearance of local press organs; v)<sup>17</sup> that discord can spring up in the Party thanks to the excessive division of our forces; vi) the diversion of forces from general Party work and their narrow focus on purely local activity; noting all this, it is recommended that every member of the Central Committee takes a negative stance towards the existence of local press organs and tries to concentrate all efforts on the construction of a durable general-Party group as the only means to the practical and theoretical unity of active groups.
  
- 7) Given that a mechanical unification of active groups which failed to guarantee unity in action and in terms of tendency would threaten to be purely fictitious and could discredit the Party in the eyes of its supporters and opponents through the complete absence of general-Party activity, the organisation of a Congress with the goal of unification is recognised as something undesirable at the present moment.

The final part is in the next letter . . .

*'Bulka'*

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<sup>17</sup> The fourth point in this copy, made in the department of the police, is missing (footnote by *Leninskii Sbornik* editors).

## Letters from Iulii Martov to the London Section of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*

*The decision of the Belostock Conference to create an Organising Committee for the preparation of a genuine Second RSDLP Congress was not immediately implemented. This was partially the consequence of police activity: arrests brought about the collapse of the only just formed 'Southern Union', whilst Iskra's own representative at the meeting, Fedor Ilich Dan (1871–1947), a future historian of the Russian Social-Democratic movement, was also seized by police.<sup>1</sup> Eleven Iskra operatives were also arrested at a separate meeting in Kiev a short time before the conference began. In these circumstances, Iskra did not show immediate enthusiasm for establishing the Organising Committee, evidently preferring to build up support for its own faction among the local RSDLP organisations. Thus, when a representative of the Bund approached Lenin concerning the Organising Committee shortly after the conference, he received a less than constructive response.<sup>2</sup> However, by June, Iskra's leading supporters in St. Petersburg could report their 'capture' of the committee, an event which was followed by a declaration of allegiance from the Moscow Committee and then the 'Northern Union', a local organisation active among several small towns in the Vladimir, Kostroma and Yaroslavl gubernias. On this basis, a small group of leading*

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1 Fedor Il'ich Dan (1871–1947) was a native of St. Petersburg and a physician by training. A member of the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle', he was arrested in 1896 and exiled for five years. He joined the *Iskra* support group in Berlin after completing his sentence and returned to Russia as the representative of the *Iskra* Editorial Board to the Belostock Conference, after which he was again arrested and this time sentenced to six years. However, he escaped a short time into his sentence and returned to the emigration shortly after the Second Congress of the RSDLP, becoming a leading figure in the group headed by Martov. He remained a Menshevik after the October revolution and was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922. He continued to produce pro-Menshevik periodicals in the name of the RSDLP until his death. His historical work, *The Origins of Bolshevism* (1943) offers a somewhat slanted account of the *Iskra* period, which rehearses the main criticisms of Lenin raised by the Martovites in the post-Second Congress period, and in Martov's pamphlet *The State of Siege in the RSDLP* – Chapter 18 in the present collection – one of the appendices is a letter by Dan, in which he gives an account of his views on the organisational questions separating the 'Leninists' and the 'Martovites'.

2 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 36, pp. 112–14.



Iskra supporters were invited abroad to discuss plans for the Organising Committee with the Iskra Editorial Board, including Vladimir Noskov from the Northern Union, Vladimir Panteleimonovich Krasnukha (1867–1913) from St. Petersburg and Petr Ananevich Krasikov (1870–1939), an energetic ‘flying’ agent who moved from one area to another, co-ordinating the work of the Iskra faction.<sup>3</sup>

This Iskra core appears to have been instructed to co-opt appropriate members on to the Organising Committee from the other factions of the RSDLP in accordance with the proposal made at Belostock that the Organising Committee should be multi-factional in character. This process was facilitated by the reappearance of the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* newspaper in September 1902, as this issue included a declaration of support for Iskra policies.<sup>4</sup> This declaration was significant, as the newspaper had previously seemed to advertise closer affinities with the Bund and *Rabochee Delo*, especially through its links with the ‘Southern Union’. By changing its allegiances to the advantage of Iskra, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* placed the latter in a very strong position on the Organising Committee relative to the Bund, the only remaining faction of any weight,<sup>5</sup> and on this basis it seems that Iskra finally consented to an initial meeting of the Organising Committee, which was held in October 1902, in Pskov.

The Bund was invited to this meeting but failed to attend, possibly as a result of a miscommunication, or possibly because, having been rebuffed by Iskra when the latter was in a weaker position, it now suspected that Iskra was planning to dominate the committee, a suspicion that was, in essence, justified.<sup>6</sup> According to the latter interpretation, the Bund only decided to join the Organising Committee

3 Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 8, pp. 272–4; Krupskaya 1930, p. 81. Krasikov is the author of the letter in Chapter 16 written under the pseudonym ‘Pavlovich’. A detailed account of his life can be found in the commentary to this document.

4 *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* No. 10, p. 18.

5 It is perhaps worth emphasising that the pro-*Rabochee Delo* ‘Economists’ were not only lacking their own regular publication following the demise of *Rabochee Delo*. With the collapse of the Southern Union, they also lacked a factional apparatus comparable to that of *Iskra* inside Russia. Thus, whilst it is evident that the ‘Economists’ had supporters in several localities, they lacked any means for co-ordinating their efforts in a common struggle with *Iskra* for control of the RSDLP. In this fight, they had to rely on the Bund which, though sympathetic and well-organised, was limited by the fact that it only organised among Jewish workers in the most westerly regions of the Russian Empire.

This situation was temporarily alleviated with the appearance of the newspaper *Krasnoe Znamia* at the beginning of 1903, but only three issues of this publication appeared before it folded.

6 Lenin evidently wanted to minimise the influence of the Bund on the Organising Committee, owing to its preference for a federal organisation for the RSDLP. See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34,

*after it became known that the police had arrested several pro-Iskra participants in the Pskov meeting, an occurrence which made the balance of factional forces once again more favourable to the Bund.*

*Significantly, at the same time as one section of the Iskra faction was applying itself to the task of building a cross-factional Organising Committee in the manner just described, other Iskra supporters were continuing the fight outlined in Krzhizhanovskaia's letter for control of the local RSDLP committees, a seemingly contradictory situation, which appears to have contributed to the emergence of 'Leninist' and 'Martovite' trends in Iskra at a later stage. Despite Iskra supporters in the northern capital believing that they had finally won over the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle as early as June 1902, the 'Economists' around Rabochaia Mysl' fought back towards the end of 1902, establishing support in the so-called 'Workers Organisation'<sup>7</sup> of the Union of Struggle, publishing a new edition of their newspaper even though it had been declared dissolved by the committee, and publishing a counter-declaration to the one issued in favour of Iskra by this same committee. In December, a similar battle broke out in Kiev, and in this case, control of the local committee changed hands several times.*

*During this period, Martov, a member of the Editorial Board of Iskra, frequently found himself in Paris. At this time, there was a strong revolutionary mood among Russian students studying in Paris, the result being well-attended public lectures by both revolutionary and academic figures. Martov gave lectures*

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p. 118, and Vol. 36, p. 112. A brief outline of the Bund's position on the Second RSDLP Congress can be found in Chapter 14 of the collection.

7 'Workers' Organisations' existed in numerous 'Unions of Struggle' and were bodies responsible for directing political work carried out among factory workers. They were subordinate to the leading committees and they existed alongside similar bodies responsible for work in the army, among students and other social groups. One of their main responsibilities was that of establishing contact with sympathetic workers in as many workplaces as possible, who would provide information useful in the composition of leaflets and proclamations. The 'Workers' Organisations' also organised reading groups and networks among local workplaces for the rapid distribution of such material.

They had originally been set up because the social distinction between factory workers and educated Social Democrats made it difficult for the latter to approach factory workers directly without arousing suspicion, and relied on the recruitment of individual workers, who by their status could make contact with a large number of workplaces in the course of their work. Thus, for example, the Kiev 'Workers' Organisation' was run as a private industrial training school, whose apprentices secured posts in different enterprises. Lenin came to criticise the existence of these organs, arguing that they should merge with the leading committees and protesting that they had a tendency to detach the best worker-organisers from the socialist influence of the intelligentsia Social Democrats, who traditionally dominated the committees.

as part of this programme and, during these visits, he also took the opportunity to search out candidates suitable for work with the Iskra organisation in Russia. Those he considered were mainly experienced revolutionaries with previous history in the Russian Iskra organisation, and among them we find the group which had been arrested prior to the Belstock Conference, and which had broken out of the Lukianovskaia gaol in Kiev and fled Russia in August 1902.<sup>8</sup> His letters to Lenin and the other Iskra leaders in London from this period are intriguing for the way in which they discuss the variety of moods and ideas that predominated among these candidates, many of which appear critical of or divergent from the policies established by both the Iskra Editorial Board in relation to the Organising Committee and the Samara Congress in relation to the intra-Party factional campaign.

Various objections to the established Iskra strategies are described in these letters, ranging from a fear that the RSDLP as a whole would split as a result of Iskra's campaign against the 'Economists', to a fear that the opponents of Iskra were too strong. On the basis of the second concern, Martov too seems to turn against the idea of an RSDLP Congress involving non-Iskra organisations at one point, whilst also opposing Lenin's plans for a multi-factional Organising Committee. Though he subsequently retracts this plan, Martov then argues in favour of compromise with the non-Iskra tendencies, presumably as a result of this very same perception, namely that the latter are too strong. He also refers to the likelihood of a multi-factional Central Committee in the post-Congress period and reflects on the idea that many of those declaring themselves to be pro-Iskra really only accept its programme and support the newspaper, but not its organisational ideas.

All these remarks anticipate the arguments made by the 'Martovites' at the Second Congress of the RSDLP to a greater or lesser degree, and given the presence of many of the leading figures in this faction in Paris around this time: Martov, Trotsky, Viktor Nikolaevich Krokhamal (1873–1933) and Ekaterina Alexandrova, it is tempting to trace the origins of 'soft Iskra-ism' or 'Martovism' to the period Martov spent in Paris at the end of 1902.

If this interpretation is correct, then the phenomenon appears to have gained strength partially because of the arrest of three key agents initially detailed for work on the Organising Committee by Lenin following the Organising Committee's first meeting.<sup>9</sup> For various reasons, it seems that the Russian Iskra leadership, the Samara 'bureau', was unable to either step into the roles of these individuals or to find suitable replacements for them, leaving the émigré Iskra leadership to search for alternative personnel to work on the Organising Committee. Eventually,

8 A remarkable account of this adventure is to be found in Piatnitskii 1933, pp. 40–3.

9 Ivan Ivanovich Radchenko (1874–1942), Krasnukha, Lepeshinskii.

*Martov and Lenin agreed to send Alexandrova, despite her disagreements with aspects of official Iskra policy which, if only briefly hinted at in Martov's letters, become very apparent later on.<sup>10</sup> This choice may have been influenced by a calculation that a more conventional Iskra-ite could have antagonised non-Iskra members of the Organising Committee. However, if this was the case, this calculation appears to have had unintended consequences in so far as Alexandrova, for all practical purposes, later defected to Iuzhnyi Rabochii and became a key advocate of its views both before and during the Second Congress.*

*These letters are also of interest in so far as they reveal the attitudes of the Iskra leadership to Trotsky at this time, who had recently arrived in London following his flight from Siberia. According to his autobiography, My Life, Trotsky was sent to Paris during this period to give a lecture, and it is here that he was introduced to his second wife, Natalia Sedova, apparently by Alexandrova.<sup>11</sup> There is little in the letters that contradicts his perception that most of the Iskra leadership viewed him with interest and regarded him as promising, if still a little too young, during this period. They also confirm that Martov, and probably Lenin too, contemplated sending him to Russia as an agent, possibly recognising that his combative character and literary skills would have helped in the struggle with the St. Petersburg 'Economists'; a plan ultimately abandoned, apparently in the belief that Trotsky required further political education.*

*Martov's estimates of other leading Iskra figures are also an object of curiosity, especially given his subsequent loyalties at the Second Congress. Krokhmal (also 'Fomin', 'Adonis'), one of the key figures among the Martovites at the Second Congress, is portrayed in consistently negative light, whilst Krasikov ('Pavlovich', 'Ignatius') is the subject of somewhat greater praise, as is Alexandrova. Meanwhile, the Iskra bureau in Samara is described as passive, despite its formal involvement in the Organising Committee, and frustration appears to be expressed regarding the 'legal' existence of the Krzhizhanovskies who, seemingly in the view of Martov, should be working underground and drawing a salary from the Iskra organisation. This detail is intriguing as it appears to show that even some of the leading Iskra figures were not at this stage 'professional revolutionaries', in the sense that they worked full time for the faction.*

*Excerpts from five letters are included in this section, all of which were published in the Leninskii Sbornik,<sup>12</sup> the source from which they have been translated. Only selected passages from the correspondence are included as some of the material does not appear to be particularly relevant or interesting from the*

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 15 and Chapter 16.

<sup>11</sup> Trotsky 1970, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 4, pp. 171–88.

*point of view of a historian of the RSDLP. Owing to the numerous references to different individuals, arrangements and organisations in these passages, a large proportion of which refer to purely mundane aspects of the work of the Iskra Editorial Board, a mass of footnotes would have been required for the meaning of certain passages to become clear to the reader, and work in this direction did not always prove to be especially profitable.*

## Letters of Iulii Martov to the London Section of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*

Martov to the London Section of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*<sup>13</sup>

Paris, 1 December 1902

EM's<sup>14</sup> plan is to go to Moscow, settle there, meet up with Sonia<sup>15</sup> and re-establish the Organising Committee. In view of this, I think that the main task of the Pen<sup>16</sup> should consist in the strengthening of St. Petersburg. I have found out that Rerikh still works there, the St. Petersburg man who escaped from exile, about whom Citizen<sup>17</sup> wrote, saying that he got on with him very well.

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13 Lenin, Zasulich and Potresov.

14 Ekaterina Alexandrova. For details of this individual, see the commentary to Chapter 15.

15 The Samara 'bureau' of the *Iskra* Central Committee: Gleb Krzhizhanovskii and Zinaida Krzhizhanovskaia.

16 Trotsky.

17 Vladimir Panteleimonovich Krasnukha (1867–1913), a key *Iskra* supporter in St. Petersburg who was involved in the conquest of the local RSDLP committee for *Iskra* in June 1902. Subsequently he was detailed for work on the Organising Committee and was arrested after the meeting between *Iskra* and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representatives at Pskov in October 1902, at which the work of this body was restarted following a break of several months. His departure from the capital seems to have encouraged an attempt by the 'Economists' to seize back control of the St. Petersburg Committee towards the end of 1902, but this attempt failed, resulting in a split in St. Petersburg, which lasted until the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

Petrashkevich,<sup>18</sup> having given us an account of the St. Petersburg split, says that Rerikh<sup>19</sup> supports a conciliatory position in the struggle going on there. If the Pen succeeds in getting along with them, then perhaps the work will be made easier. Here, they are still asking in St. Petersburg for one of the women-workers I know, who is decisively pro-*Iskra*. I promised to help her with the passport (by the way, given that she is Jewish, would it not be possible to get papers for her from the wife of some worker-refugee in Whitechapel; her distinguishing features: brown hair, medium height, indefinite age);<sup>20</sup> right now, she is raising the question of financial support (she is actually starving). I charged Ek M<sup>21</sup> with introducing herself to her and checking her out: I cannot rely on my own judgement – she does not like me, but remember that Liuba stood up for her and was ready to make use of her. If E.M. decides that she could be useful to the Pen, then all is well. The Pen's work would be in St. Petersburg. Let him concentrate on this all the more and let the Organising Committee fall entirely to EM, Kurtz<sup>22</sup> and Sonia, who would be obliged to leave their current place. Familiarise the Pen with VI's letter to Erema<sup>23</sup> and talk over in more detail how

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18 Apparently, one Strumilin, about whom no further information has been found.

19 It remains unclear who exactly 'Rerikh' was.

20 This might be Cecilia Bobrovskaja (1876–1960), who fits the description in all respects. She was later the author of a well-known Bolshevik autobiography (Bobrovskaja 1934).

21 Ekaterina Alexandrova.

22 Friedrich Wilhelmovich Lengnik (1873–1936) was a former member of the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle', who was arrested in 1896. Latvian by nationality, he studied at the St. Petersburg Technology Institute, which was the venue for many of the propaganda-circle meetings of the Union. He joined the Russian *Iskra* Organisation after completing his sentence, eventually becoming an agent in the Kiev region where, at the time of Martov's letter, he was apparently directing a not-always-successful struggle with the 'Economists' for control of the local RSDLP committee. He had also been elected to the Organising Committee at the Pskov Conference of November 1902 (see the commentary to the present document for details). He was elected to the Central Committee of the RSDLP at the Second Congress, and was among the firm allies of Lenin in the post-Congress period. He was arrested in 1904 whilst still a member of the Central Committee, but was soon released owing to ill health (tuberculosis) and appears to have dropped out of activity until the revolution, earning a living as a teacher of geometry and technical drawing. After the revolution he worked in the Peoples' Commissariats of Enlightenment and Foreign Trade and was a regular delegate at Party Congresses. He also served on the Central Control Commission, the supreme disciplinary body of the Communist Party, which, though initially designed to fight corruption and bureaucracy, is viewed by some as a key tool through which Stalin consolidated his power.

23 This is a reference to *A Letter to a Comrade on Organisational Tasks* (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 231–52). Erema was the pseudonym of one Anatoli Abramovich Shneerson



to conduct business in St. Petersburg: he is, you realise, very inexperienced. As far as Moscow is concerned, we think as follows: Bunny,<sup>24</sup> with the arrival of Vasili, <sup>25</sup> will be able to go either to St. Petersburg as well or, indeed, if he prefers, to the finance section. By the way, along with the other information, send all of those celebrated 'contacts' of Boris's, <sup>26</sup> which are marked with the word 'money' to Vasili. It is probable that these are less hopeless than all the rest. As for the work of the Organising Committee itself, I came to the following conclusion: to hasten with the Congress, come what may, is dangerous. The forces are not prepared for victory at a Congress attended by all the committees. If business continues in such a slapdash, lazy fashion as now, then there remains one decisive step: agreement, whether by means of a Congress, conference or a tour of all 'our' committees – St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tver, Nizhnii, Saratov, Kiev, Kharkov, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, the Northern Union – that *Iskra* should be the central newspaper, that these committees should unite into one organisation, appoint a Central Committee and invite groups remaining outside the agreement to enter into agreement with the Central Committee. Provided that, in the aforementioned committees, there is a majority of ours, this way will remain the only method of obtaining rapid unification without the inevitable – in the case of a hurried general Congress – necessity of entering into a compromise with the Union and 'Struggle'. Small Russian groups will easily affiliate to a whole formed in such a manner; committees of the Odessa and Ekaterinoslav types will naturally become restive, but then the Central Committee will send all their forces to them and, most likely, win them over. But if this does not happen, it will not be a great scandal if two or three committees declare that they do not recognise the legality of the re-established Party; but with the Bund, we will have to conduct a real struggle. This, of course, is a plan for the worse-case scenario; EM approves this; write and say what you think of it (you and Vladimir Ilich). We have not told the Pen or Krokmal: the Pen because he has decided to concentrate all his attention on St. Petersburg; Krokmal, because we have a policy of not telling him everything – it is calmer that way. We did

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(1881–1937), another St. Petersburg *Iskra* supporter, who later supporter the Mensheviks. He was executed by the NKVD.

24 *Zaichik* in the original, which could also be translated as 'little hare', or any term of endearment. It also refers to the reflection of a beam of sunlight when caught on a mirror and reflected onto a non-reflecting surface. According to Krupskaya, this was the Moscow-based agent, Glafira Ivanova Okulova (1878–1957).

25 Ekaterina Alexandrova. It appears to have been fairly normal for leading figures in the *Iskra* organisation to have had several different cadre-names and for these to be used interchangeably in correspondence.

26 'Boris' usually refers to the Bund in *Iskra* correspondence.



not tell him that the Pen will soon be going to Russia and that EM is also doing the same. He sulks, sensing that we are not entirely open with him but, in the final analysis, it will be good even for him.<sup>27</sup> [...]

### Martov to Lenin

5 December 1902

[...] I have now read your letter to Vasilii.<sup>28</sup> I expected that you would object as he does not want to remove the word 'federative', which is entirely out of place here (in my opinion, at least). Perhaps we differ with him on the details of the plan. The fusion I am thinking of will only be 'federative' in the sense that mutually sympathetic groups unite only on the basis of their shared opinions and not on the basis of a Party constitution. This merging signifies a declaration of war against those committees who have proved entirely without substance in the business of assisting Party unity and who have the boldness to not submit to the position that will be established by the agreement of 'our' committees. My entire plan is based on the conviction that a Congress of all committees will perhaps accept our programme and our resolutions of principle, but will hardly create a Party organisation on the basis of those minimal-centralist principles which we could countenance. Even those committees I consider 'ours' could follow 'Struggle' and the Union on questions of organisation at a general Congress, not so much because of the influence of their arguments so much as from a wish to 'get on with' the Ekaterinoslavites, the Odessans and the Bundists, who would stand up for the cause of 'autonomy', 'decentralisation', local press organs, popular newspapers, democratism and so forth. Right now, a member of the Ekaterinoslav Committee is here, a sufficiently dull-witted specimen but seemingly one of the most influential in the committee, as he has been there a long time and has an educational qualification (engineer). Accordingly, he says such wild things about the tasks of the day that all optimism about a general Congress where such wise guys can show up in a solid minority is vanishing. He says (speaking for the whole town) that it is still 'not the right time for the creation of a united organisation', that for present it is necessary to confine ourselves to 'local work'. Calling a Congress of 'our' committees, we can, and should, organise the representatives of them as democratically as possible so that the decision is not later subject to dispute,

27 This discontented Krokmal became one of the key pro-Martov figures at the Second RSDLP Congress under the pseudonym 'Fomin'.

28 This letter does not appear in either Lenin *et al.* 1924–85 or Lenin 1960–79.

as is now happening in St. Petersburg and Kiev.<sup>29</sup> This will demand a large amount of preparatory work on the part of those *Iskra* supporters who know how to speak and to convince. But if they direct their energy towards this capturing of already formally captured committees, the matter will be in the bag. Once people start to talk about a general Congress, it will be necessary to direct part of our forces towards the preparation of entirely alien and backward committees; moreover it will be necessary to have 'Struggle' and the Union at the Congress and, perhaps, the Bund, and if it is possible to hope that we will by and large triumph at this Congress, then we have to fear that organisational decisions will be made in the spirit of compromise with the 'autonomist' and the 'democratic' tendencies. For the Central Committee, the composition of which could prove to be of a compromising character, extremely difficult work will then begin, the same as that which now falls to the Organising Committee. The road proposed by me is not constitutional, but it can only speed up the war with those who want to fight. And it promises – if successful – a Party organisation with a much weaker shade of federalism than that which would inevitably be given to it by a 'general' Congress. [...]

#### **Martov to the London Section of the Editorial Board**

8 December 1902, Paris

As for Vasilii's plan, I see that you, like Vladimir Ilich, did not fully understand it. In my last letter to Vladimir Ilich, I explained my point of view. I do not in the least contemplate the 'election' of a Central Committee by 'our' committees. I think that a Congress of 'our' committees would sooner 'elect', that is, confirm, our Central Committee than a Congress of everybody. At a Congress of everybody a mood for 'unity' would reign (among everybody, including ours) and therefore some 'splinter' or other would inevitably enter the Central Committee.

#### **Martov to Lenin**

(11 December 1902, Paris)

The story about the renewal of the 'Zurich subversion' is getting on my nerves. The devil only knows what it is! Bobrovskii's letter to Krokhmal – to whom they

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29 This refers to a hard factional struggle for control of the committee between the *Iskra* supporters and the 'Economist' supporters of *Rabochaia Mysl'* and *Rabochee Delo*. The struggle produced a split in St. Petersburg, but not in Kiev.

turned for collaboration (they also asked the same of Bauman and Halperin) – which I read shows that Noskov (he is not named but they could not have had any other information) entirely discredits our Russian work and demoralises our public.<sup>30</sup> I convinced Krokhamal to write to them with the advice to not get wound up over nothing. The incident with the Dobrovolskii telegram reminds me of the story with the Cook (Shchekodlinyi). We and Vasilii think it will be necessary to force him to come either to London or here (where he would clash with Vasilii). I am convinced that Krokhamal, whilst well understanding the foolishness of the Zurich plans, has decided to make use of them in order to create a little group for himself with whom he can, in time, go to Russia. (He told me directly that he intended, before his departure to Russia, which he is thinking about in any case – ‘when it becomes necessary’ – to have a Congress in Switzerland, to come to an agreement with Vasilii and others and to take them with him, in order to give each a definite task.) This passion of our best people to make a coterie of their own people for themselves is simply indecent. Two even slightly serious people cannot co-exist side-by-side. You realise that only this quarrelsome disposition, in other words the unwillingness of Boris Nikolaevich to get on with Pavel Ananevich, can explain his current game.<sup>31</sup> The news that the literature for the north is being delayed on this side of the border depresses me. Apart from the fact that it testifies to the utter clumsiness of our readers (the business is not that difficult), I see here – in connection with the information received by me – new evidence that our Petersburg people tendentiously embellish the true state of affairs there in their letters. This is what I have found out from a reliable source: the ‘Committee of the Workers’ Organisation’, with Bouncer at its head,<sup>32</sup> has not only openly broken with the union but has already issued an appeal in which it declares that, in view of a breach of the constitution by the intelligentsia, it is breaking with the *Iskra*-ite committee. Furthermore, it has (or will) issue No. 16 of *Rabochaia Mysl’*. Rerikh (Nadezhda Konstantinova knows about him), whom Citizen characterised as

30 Vladimir Semenovich Bobrovskii (1873–1924), Nikolai Ernestovich Bauman (1873–1905) and Viktor Krokhamal were members of the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad at this stage, having been previously played leading roles in the Russian *Iskra* organisation. They had been arrested together in February 1902 and gaoled in Kiev, but escaped with eight other leading *Iskra* supporters and successfully fled Russia in August of the same year. Lev Efimovich Halperin (1872–1951) was another agent, previously active in Baku, who was co-opted to the Central Committee by Lenin’s supporters following the Second RSDLP Congress.

31 This refers to the relationship of Noskov with Krasikov (Pavlovich).

32 ‘Bouncer’ (*Byshibalo* – as in a doorman) was apparently the pseudonym of one Tokarev, a leader of the St. Petersburg ‘Economists’ (see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, p. 116n).

'entirely ours', works on the removal of the 'split' and he has managed to do this – moreover by his own efforts (thus speaks the author of the letter) – by gradually attaching an '*Iskra* workers' circle' to the 'Committee of the Workers' Organisation'. That this is something close to the truth is shown in the next statement: Rerikh is an *Iskra* supporter, but he condemns the impropriety of the arrested *Iskra*-ites in relation to our opponents.<sup>33</sup> It is clear what kind of 'unification' we can speak of here.

The Don committee has entered into some kind of agreement with the 'Union'. The basis of the agreement – *Krasnoe Znamia*<sup>34</sup> and 'popular' literature.

I advise you to write a 'persuasive' letter to Clair that makes him come out of his quiet corner and either go over to an illegal position or, at the very least, drop his day-job and live on the means of the organisation as soon as possible.<sup>35</sup> We do not have people capable of leading the work and – in view of the different unwanted tendencies being displayed by almost everybody (unfortunately, we cannot exclude Pavel Ananovich, whom I totally trusted and who I have reason to think will also conduct some sort of 'separate' policy), by almost all of 'ours', it is absolutely necessary that the Clairs form the actual centre. Vasilii will persuade them of this, but direct pressure from our side is also important. In a month they will be granted legal access to all cities apart from the capitals.<sup>36</sup> It follows that, if they entirely drop their concerns about money, they can settle wherever is necessary. Aside from all his other attributes, Clair is better adapted than others to becoming the personal centre, linking together

33 These 'arrested *Iskra*-ites' most likely included Ivan Radchenko and Krasnukha who, having won the St. Petersburg Committee for *Iskra* using combative methods, were sent to work on the Organising Committee, in connection with which they were arrested.

34 This was a short-lived newspaper published by the Union Abroad from November 1902 to January 1903. Three issues appeared. It was a belated attempt to create a journalistic centre which could co-ordinate the activities of local 'Economists' in a struggle against *Iskra* for the support of the local committees.

35 'Clair' was Gleb Krzhizhanovskii. By profession Krzhizhanovskii was an electrical engineer who worked on establishing public-electricity grids. Prior to the revolution, he published technical and scientific works in this field and was involved in the 'electrification' programme after it. Samara, the location of the *Iskra* 'bureau', was also his home town. Martov's remark here is interesting as it shows that even some of the most senior figures in the *Iskra* faction were not 'professional revolutionaries' who received a salary for their political activities.

36 Krzhizhanovskii was arrested in 1895 as part of the same raid in St. Petersburg which caught Lenin. Like Lenin, he served a term of exile in Siberia, where he married fellow *Iskra*-ite Zinaida Nevzorova (here referred to as Zinaida Krzhizhanovskaia). Following the end of the term, he returned to his home town of Samara, where he appears to have been placed under police supervision.

all these prickly 'ultra-individualists'. You should hurry: so far the present disorder has not resulted in a 'Russian subversion'.

I will not start further arguments about the Congress, though I am not convinced by your case. Here it is a question not of different points of view, but only of different appraisals of the current position. I see things in a less optimistic light, Vasilii too. But he made his plan conditionally dependent on the results of his trip and whatever he finds on the ground. Only then will it become clear.

### Martov to the London Section of the Editorial Board

Paris, 20 December 1902

[....]

Of course, the Unionists and the 'Struggle'-ists are banging on to everybody about an impending 'split' in all the committees recognising *Iskra*. This is, of course, nonsense, and the fact that our own practical workers let their noses drop in this situation and start to depress everybody, conducting themselves in a highly unseemly manner, is a bad sign. The Old Ones<sup>37</sup> ran to Ivanshin<sup>38</sup> to whinge about the 'sad events', about the 'great failure'. Ivanshin, who is now conducting himself in a highly sympathetic manner, complained to Vasilii that it was necessary for these so-called '*Iskra*-ists' to keep quiet and that they had blabbered about something with such expansiveness to Krichevskii and Gurevich,<sup>39</sup> whom they had already approached with the 'unexpected news'. I fear that these intriguers are managing to extract information from the Old Ones who are 'simple, oh how simple'. But all the more outrageous is the behaviour of Adonis,<sup>40</sup> who conducts himself like a true *Rabochee Delo*-ist in these circumstances. 'I said, I warned that it was impossible using military methods'. All this he expounded to Marten,<sup>41</sup> who was very upset (quite sincerely, of course) by the behaviour of his protégé. And so Marten comes and asks whether it is true, as Adonis says, that the whole St. Petersburg split was due to the tactlessness of the St. Petersburg followers of *Iskra* and whether the latter

37 This group was probably made up of experienced *Iskra* agents, especially those who participated in the Kiev gaol break, and Ekaterina Alexandrova.

38 Vladimir Ivanshin was one of the former editors of *Rabochee Delo*.

39 Emmanuel Gurevich, a member of the 'Struggle' group.

40 Krokmal.

41 Petr Hermogenovich Smidovich (1874–1935), subsequently a senior apparatchik in the Soviet system, whose ashes are interred in the walls of the Kremlin.

was inspired by 'London' and by Lenin in particular, in spite of his, Adonis's, own warnings and his explanation that it was first necessary to strengthen our forces, as opposed to expelling the 'Bouncers' and rushing out an 'announcement'. I simply replied to Marten that Adonis was gossiping and he was fairly easily brought to his senses. Then Belskii arrives, scandalised by Nadezhdin,<sup>42</sup> indignant at his demagoguery and despondently adds: it is all so sad that all the workers are leaving *Iskra*. 'Who told you that lie?' 'Viktor Nikolaevich'.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, he reduced the Old Ones to despondency himself. Maltsman is also muttering some sort of stupidity. And all this crap is to a large degree because Ignatius<sup>44</sup> is very much not to the liking of Viktor Nikolaevich, who manages to see in him 'an overbearing relation' towards himself (there was already, prior to my arrival, an incident connected to this 'relationship' in which Vasiliu had to have a row with all the Kiev people). I very much fear that Krokmal too conducts such conversations with those 'sympathisers', of whom there are very many here, who go to him and who still need schooling. He had a conversation with me about the St. Petersburg work and I started to laugh at his nervousness and declared that we were completely relaxed about the St. Petersburg revolution and approved of Kasian<sup>45</sup> and Ignatius. He sulked and grew snide on account of the surprising tranquility I manage to preserve in relation to such organisational blunders.

I am speaking about all this in detail because it seems that this episode can illustrate the general position of Adonis. It is not war, but some sort of childish rebelliousness which shows itself in practice through the fact that he is particularly overbearing (for he oppresses everybody in general and with sufficient crudeness) towards those of the young in the local circle who distinguish themselves by their fervent *Iskra* patriotism.

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42 Evgenii Osipovich Zelenskii (1877–1905), who published No. 16 of *Rabochaia Mysl'*, supposedly the local newspaper of the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle', in Geneva in November 1902. His name is also associated with the Geneva-based journal *Svoboda* from 1901–3, which adopted a position drawing from both Social Democracy and Populism.

43 Krokmal.

44 Krasikov (Pavlovich).

45 Ivan Radchenko.

## Report of the Fourth Congress of the Bund

*As well as the polemical articles directed against Iskra and Zaria, the main resolutions of the Fourth Congress of the Bund, which had taken place during the spring of 1901, were printed in Rabochee Delo No. 10. From this source, a picture is obtained of an organisation which was in many respects 'Economist', in so far as it placed great emphasis on the role of non-political strikes in giving workers political consciousness, and because it seems to assume that more radical political ideas are acquired in a stepwise manner by workers who had been politicised in this way. As with the pamphlet, On Agitation, and Krichevskii's article in Rabochee Delo No. 7, the role of police repression in radicalising workers is emphasised, and though there is much discussion of the importance of political activity in light of the February–March events, these resolutions seem sketchy in terms of detail. No reference is made to the type of issues or demands which should form the substance of this political agitation beyond a reference to terrorist attempts, and even then the line to be taken on these incidents and the way in which they are to be exploited is far from clear.*

*Apart from these parallels with the thinking of Rabochee Delo, the resolutions are of interest in that they pose the question of the Jewish labour movement's relation to the broader Russian Social Democracy and that of the Jewish people as a whole to a future Russian socialist state. In terms of its maximum programme, the Bund supports the formula of a federal state with 'complete autonomy' for each of the nations inhabiting the Russian empire. This appears to be suggesting that every individual in a socialist society should be free to define their own nationality regardless of their geographical location and that on this basis every individual should enjoy access to appropriate cultural institutions and other rights associated with their chosen nationality, such as culturally appropriate rest days (Sabbaths). In line with this thinking, the Jewish people are declared to be a nation, despite the absence of a clear territory inhabited by them, and without the aim of creating such a territory for them being articulated, as was the case with Zionism.*

*At first sight, the formulation does not seem to be of any great practical import in so far as the Bund does not see it as a suitable topic for agitation prior to the disappearance of the autocracy, admitting that it will only agitate for the repeal of anti-Jewish legislation. However, these federalist preferences are also reflected in the Bund's attitude to the RSDLP, specifically in the question of its internal organisation. This it declares to be 'a federative combination of the Social-Democratic*



*parties of all nations inhabiting the Russian state', a claim which was made without the Bund having consulted other nationally based Social-Democratic parties, most of whom had yet to declare their attitude to the RSDLP,<sup>1</sup> and in spite of the resolutions of the First Congress of the RSDLP, which exhibited a strong tendency towards centralism<sup>2</sup> and in which representatives of the Bund had played no small part.*

*Within this 'national-federal' framework, the Bund declares itself to be 'the representative of the Jewish proletariat' in the RSDLP. In practice, this seems to have signified that the Bund had the right to organise Jewish workers separately from the RSDLP organisations which were willing to accept members from all ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> Sensitive to accusations of divisive behaviour, the Fourth Congress resolved to avoid setting up sections of the Bund in locations where integrated RSDLP organisations already existed, yet at the same time it stated the general ambition of expanding its organisation into the southern (Ukrainian) region, an area in which integrated organisations undoubtedly did exist at this time.<sup>4</sup> The implication of this was that there would be, if not splits,*

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- 1 For example, the Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland actually predated the RSDLP, having been founded in 1893, but did not send delegates to the First Congress of the RSDLP and only sent 'consultative' (non-voting) delegates to the Party's Second Congress in 1903. The Union of Lithuanian Workers merged with the Polish Social Democrats in 1899 and was thus also in an ambiguous position. Meanwhile, the Labour Party of Finland did not have direct relations with the RSDLP. The Latvian Social-Democratic Labour Party emerged in 1904 and, like the Poles, eventually resolved to become a territorial organisation of the RSDLP according to the latter's centralist and multi-ethnic constitution. None of these organisations showed the least intention of becoming ethnically-specific, as opposed to territorially-defined, parties.
  - 2 The organisational statutes of the RSDLP approved at its First Congress can be found in: Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 223–6. This constitution granted the Bund 'autonomy' in matters relating exclusively to the Jewish proletariat and a degree of independence from the central institutions was also granted to the 'Unions of Struggle' in relation to matters of purely local significance. Apart from that, all subordinate bodies were expected to implement the decisions of the Central Committee, which was expected to lead the local organisations in common campaigns. No mention was made of different national groupings being represented by different organisations inside the Party.
  - 3 This is strongly implied in the first of the two articles from *Poslednie Izvestiia*, which are included in Chapter 14 of the collection.
  - 4 In Kiev, for example, the 'Union of Struggle' had involved the merger of a group of Russian Plekhanovites with a circle of Polish Social Democrats and these two were also joined by a group from the Polish Socialist Party, who came over to the side of Social Democracy. There was also an RSDLP group in Ekaterinoslav in which Jews such as Martynov and Isaak Lalayants, an Armenian, had played a role.

*then something of a competition between the latter and the Bund for influence over Jewish workers, who would be courted by both 'segregated' and 'integrated' Social-Democratic organisations. Not without good reason, Iskra soon came to view this notion as divisive, wasteful and disruptive of the organisational cohesion of the RSDLP, with the effect that during the next two years, the relations between it and the Bund over this issue became increasingly strained.*<sup>5</sup>

## The Fourth Congress of the General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia and Poland

*(Communication of the Foreign Committee of the General Jewish Workers' Union)*

At Congress were 24 representatives from different towns, including Vitebsk, Dvinsk,<sup>6</sup> Minsk, Gomel, Vilno,<sup>7</sup> Kovno,<sup>8</sup> Grodno, Belostock,<sup>9</sup> Warsaw, Łódź, two southern towns, the Union of Jewish Bristle Workers, one other trade organisation and the Central Committee of the Bund. Congress lasted five days, though only 16 people took part in the fifth day's session (a conference – such conferences are organised from time to time by the Central Committee independent of Congresses. The present conference was the fourth which has taken place.)

Congress started its work by hearing reports from all the aforementioned towns and organisations, from the Central Committee and also a short report from the Foreign Committee of the Bund. Then it went over to the discussion of 20 questions that had been placed on the agenda.

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5 For more details, see Chapters 14, 15 and 16, as well as their respective commentaries.

6 Daugavpils, in modern-day Latvia.

7 Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

8 Kaunas, the second city of Lithuania.

9 Białystok, today in Poland.

## Resolutions

1) *Strikes and their significance.* Recognising, as before, that the strike is one of the most important means of developing the class and political consciousness of the working masses and of improving their economic conditions, Congress nonetheless finds it necessary to recommend the following guiding principles to committees: a) to direct the main thrust of the strike movement to those branches of industry which have not yet been captured by the movement, or with relatively backward conditions of labour; b) in those cases where the problem is that the owners are trying to worsen existing conditions or take away previously won improvements – to stand up for them with all energy and persistence; c) to display caution in organising new strikes in those branches of industry where by such means the maximum results in terms of the improvement of labour conditions and a degree of class and political consciousness has, *relatively speaking*, already been achieved.

2) *Economic Terror.* In view of the fact that economic terror both against the bosses and strikebreakers (traitor-workers who work during a strike) dims the Social-Democratic consciousness of workers, lowers their moral level and discredits the workers' movement – Congress speaks against it.

3) *Violence on the part of the police.* Congress recommends taking the following measures of struggle against violence on the part of the police:

- a) make a legal complaint in every case of violence;
- b) publish the facts in the émigré-socialist and non-socialist press and in the Russian and Polish illegal press, and if possible also in the legal press;
- c) issue proclamations to workers and to society;
- d) in outstanding cases, organise protest demonstrations.

4) *Demonstrations.* Recognising, as before, the great significance of demonstrations and recommending from now on the use of them as a means of struggle, Congress proposes:

- i) to organise them everywhere;
- ii) to train the mass element to come out on a demonstration only following the call of an organisation; to organise demonstrations independent of agreement with non-Jewish organisations in *exceptional* circumstances, whilst calling non-Jewish workers to them.

5) *Political Struggle*. The best means of attracting the broad public to the movement is economic struggle, on the basis of which political agitation should be developed, extending it beyond the limits of economic struggle; but there is no need to carry out political agitation *only* on an economic basis in the first instance. As means of political struggle, Congress recognised:

- a) political (verbal and written) agitation;
- b) political demonstrations;
- c) May Day strikes with the presentation of political demands;
- d) Congress recognised that it was not the business of *organisations* to resort to defensive terror in order to eliminate *provocateurs* and especially harmful spies;
- e) aggressive political terror as a means of political struggle was acknowledged to be inexpedient.

6) Recognising the necessity of going over to a more intensive political agitation, Congress recommended the following practical measures for the development of political consciousness:

- a) give local organisations a more political character;
- b) if terrorist acts take place again, they should be used by us for the development of political consciousness by means of proclamations;
- c) respond to all events which allow political agitation with *local* proclamations, if the Central Committee finds that these events are inappropriate for a general proclamation;
- d) organise political celebrations more frequently;
- e) pay more attention to the development of political funds;
- f) familiarise workers to a greater degree with the existing state and social institutions and their inadequacies.

7) In the discussion of the question of political struggle, the following resolution regarding the February and March events of this year was unanimously adopted: 'Congress expresses the solidarity of the whole organised Jewish proletariat with our Russian comrades in their struggle against the political disenfranchisement of the masses, which has shown itself especially intensively in recent months in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov and other towns. Apart from this, Congress expresses its sympathy with all students who are fighting for academic freedom and against the arbitrary behaviour of the police'.

8) *The National Question*. Congress recognises that, according to the idea of the Social-Democratic programme, any kind of oppression, not only of one class over another, not only of the government over citizens, but also of one nationality over another and the dominance of one language over another, must be opposed. Congress recognises that a state such as Russia, based on a multitude of heterogeneous nationalities, should in future be transformed into a federation of nations with the complete autonomy of each of them, independent of the territory inhabited by them. Congress recognises that the concept of nationality is also applicable to the Jewish people. However, considering it premature to put forward the demand of national autonomy for Jews at the present time, Congress finds it sufficient, for the time being, to fight for the repeal of all exclusive laws against Jews and to protest against cases of the oppression of the Jewish nation, whilst avoiding the fanning of national feeling, which is capable only of clouding the class consciousness of the proletariat and of leading it to chauvinism.

9) *Appellation of the Bund* Congress resolved to substitute the present name of the Bund with the following: 'General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia'.<sup>10</sup>

10) *Central Organs*. Concerning *Arbeiterstimme* (*Workers' Voice*),<sup>11</sup> Congress resolved: this organ, in the form in which it has appeared recently (during the last year) entirely meets the requirements of the readers for whom it is intended, but it needs the following additions:

- a) a section chronicling the most important facts of life abroad
- b) a bibliographical department, in which to give short reviews of the illegal publications being issued, including the local organs of the Bund
- c) a section about other revolutionary organisations in Russia, Poland and Lithuania;
- d) articles of a general character, including articles about the life of Jews more often than up to now;
- e) to give the correspondence from the towns possessing local organs a more general character.

<sup>10</sup> Previously, the Bund's official name had not included 'Lithuania'.

<sup>11</sup> *Arbeiterstimme* was the Yiddish-language central newspaper of the Bund from 1897 to 1905.

Concerning *Jüdischer Arbeiter (Jewish Worker)*, Congress, finding that in its current form it does not satisfy the requirement of that layer of readers for which it is intended sufficiently well, resolved to carry out the following changes:

- 1) to make it more accessible in terms of its content, character of exposition and language;
- 2) to include in it articles on political economy and on the state apparatus of the Western-European countries and articles of a general character on questions of Russian life;
- 3) to issue it more frequently and with a smaller number of copies.

11) *Local Organs*. Congress cancels the decision of the previous (Third) Congress on the competence of local organs and also permits them to publish articles of a general character, which give priority all the same to questions of a local character. Correspondence from other towns cannot be included, only that from the sphere of activity of the local committee.

12) *The Activity of the Bund in the South of Russia*. In view of the growing requirement of a Jewish workers' movement in the south of Russia, Congress resolved:

- 1) to instruct the Central Committee to attend to the possible satisfaction of these requirements;
- 2) in those towns where only Jewish workers' organisations exist, to try to form a committee of the the Bund with their agreement;
- 3) in those towns where Jewish organisations are represented in the Party committees and where their needs can be entirely satisfied without separating them from these committees and where the separation of them into separate organisations could have a bad influence on the successes of the Russian workers' movement, separate committees of the Bund are not to be established.<sup>12</sup>

13) & 14) *Conspiratorial Questions*

15) *The Relationship of the Bund to the RSDLP*. Conceiving the RSDLP as a federative combination of the Social-Democratic parties of all nations inhabit-

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<sup>12</sup> This resolution is published by the Bund only in part [footnote by the editors of *Rabochee Delo*].

ing the Russian state, Congress decided that the Bund, as a representative of the Jewish proletariat, entered it as a federative part and instructs the Central Committee to put this decision into practice.

16) *The Relationship of the Bund to the Polish Socialist Parties:*

- 1) Given that the 'Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania' is the Social-Democratic Party of one of the nations which makes up the Russian state, Congress considers it possible for the Bund to enter into federative relations with it.
- 2) Whilst parting with the Polish Socialist Party 'Proletariat' on several tactical questions, for example on terror and demonstrations, Congress nonetheless considers it necessary to maintain friendly relations with it, as with all revolutionary socialist organisations.
- 3) As regards the PSP, in view of conditions having not been changed, Congress decided to leave in force the resolution of the previous Congress.<sup>13</sup>

17) *The Attitude of the Bund to Zionism.* Congress considers Zionism to be a reaction of the bourgeois class against anti-Semitism and the abnormal legal position of the Jewish people. Congress finds that the final goal of political Zionism – the attainment of a territory for the Jewish people – as a matter which does not have a great significance and does not solve the 'Jewish Question' in so far as it would accommodate a *small* part of the Jewish people, and in so far as Zionism aims to concentrate the *whole* Jewish people, or at least a significant part of it on this territory, Congress finds this final goal to be utopian and unrealisable. Congress believes that the agitation of the Zionists whips up national feeling and that it can obstruct the development of class-consciousness. As regards the cultural activity of certain Zionist groups, Congress relates to them as to any legal activity. Further, Congress resolved that neither in our economic nor our political organisations should Zionists be permitted under any circumstances.

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13 The attitude of the Bund to the Populist-influenced Polish Socialist Party was hostile, owing to its support for Polish independence, which the Bund saw as a concession to anti-Semitic Polish nationalism. Conversely, elements within the PSP often accused the Jewish labour movement of serving as a 'Russifying' influence in Poland. The PSP-Proletariat broke away from the PSP in 1900, seeking closer agreement with Social Democracy.



18) *Means of Attracting the Sympathy of Society.* In view of the fact that the programme and tactics of the Bund and the results attained by them should have attracted the sympathy of a significant section of the Jewish intelligentsia that is highly desirable from the point of view of the successes of the workers' movement, and in view of the fact that up to now little has been done to familiarise it with the activity of the Bund, Congress recommends the following measures:

- a) to issue an appeal to the intelligentsia in the Russian and Polish languages;
- b) to issue a report to the Paris International Socialist Congress in the Polish language;
- c) to issue an account of the Fourth Congress of the Bund in the Russian and Polish languages;
- d) when appropriate, to address the intelligentsia with appeals in the Jewish, Russian and Polish languages;
- e) to conduct enhanced oral propaganda amongst the educated layers of Jewish society
- f) to issue illegal literature for the intelligentsia.

19) *The Jubilee Issue of Arbeiterstimme.* Congress resolved to publish issue No. 25 of *Arbeiterstimme* as a jubilee edition and to include in it, among other material, if it proves possible, the programme of the Bund.

In order to complete the discussion of all questions on the agenda, Congress resolved local practical questions raised by several town representatives.

Having remembered with warm words all fighters taken from the ranks of the workers' movement, those arrested and exiled and having honoured the memory of the dead, the chairman declared the Fourth Congress of the 'General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia' closed.

## Articles from *Poslednie Izvestiia*

*The following two articles are taken from Poslednie Izvestiia, the news sheet of the London-based Foreign Committee of the Bund, both of which produced objections by Lenin in the form of the articles ‘Concerning the Statement of the Bund’ and ‘Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an Independent Political Party?’<sup>1</sup> The substance of this disagreement was the Bund’s desire to reorganise the RSDLP along the lines of a federation of Social-Democratic organisations, each of which represented a distinct national or ethnic group within the Russian empire, a proposition to which Iskra was firmly opposed. This aim on the part of the Bund was reflected in its policy of trying to set up new branches wherever Jewish workers were to be found, regardless of the preferences of local RSDLP organisations and regardless of the fact that some Jewish workers and activists had evidently joined these ‘integrated’ organisations. Opposing such integration, the Bund considered the Jews to be a separate nation requiring its own Social-Democratic organisation, despite the fact that the Jewish population did not occupy a particular geographical space, a belief which caused them to organise in districts where other Social-Democratic groups were already active and at times to compete with them for Jewish recruits. This rivalry naturally stood as an obstacle in the way of the Bund effectively co-operating with other elements in the RSDLP in institutions such as the Organising Committee of the Second RSDLP Congress, and co-operation in this respect was only obtained at the price of a public argument between the Bund and Iskra, the Bundist side of which is reproduced here.*

*The first of the articles reflects the rivalry between local RSDLP organisations in the southern region and the Bund for the attentions of the Jewish proletariat, an issue with its origins in the decision of the Fourth Congress of the Bund to expand its operations into this area of the country.<sup>2</sup> The Ekaterinoslav Committee, in publishing a manifesto directed at Jewish workers urging them to reject Zionism and to unite politically with non-Jewish workers, appears to have caused offence by failing to mention the activities of the Bund.<sup>3</sup> In the eyes of the author of the article, this silence undermines the manifesto’s argument in so far as the Bund’s*

1 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 317–32 and pp. 328–34.

2 See Chapter 13 in the present collection, Resolution 12.

3 This manifesto has not been located. Lenin, in the article, ‘Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an Independent Political Party?’ expresses regret that it could not be re-printed in *Iskra* for reasons of space (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, p. 329).

*existence serves as the most convincing proof that there is not one homogeneous Jewish community with united interests, as was claimed by the Zionists. Apart from that, any attempt to hide the scale of the Jewish labour movement plays into the hands of anti-Semitic elements in the non-Jewish working class, a danger the authors believe the Ekaterinoslav Committee has underestimated.*

*The second article develops the idea expressed in the 15th resolution of the Bund's Fourth Congress that the RSDLP should be reorganised as a federation of nationality-based Social-Democratic parties.<sup>4</sup> In order to facilitate this reorganisation, its author argues that the forthcoming Congress of the RSDLP should be regarded as a founding Congress, which representatives of all the currently existing Social-Democratic parties operating within the Russian Empire<sup>5</sup> should attend. According to this plan, the decisions of the First Congress would no longer be considered to be in force, the justification for this being that the RSDLP as an actually-existing organisation had long since ceased to exist, as it lacked central institutions. This argument represented a new departure in the thinking of the Bund, as the organisation had previously affirmed both its adherence to the RSDLP and its respect for the decision of its First Congress.<sup>6</sup> It seems to coincide with the casual announcement in the first article that the Bund was in fact an 'independent political party' of Jewish workers, a choice of words which provoked a strong protest on the part of Lenin, rather than merely a section of the RSDLP 'autonomous in questions relating exclusively to the Jewish workers,' as the First RSDLP Congress had decided.<sup>7</sup>*

*The context of this change of emphasis, which amounted to the suggestion that, if only temporarily, the Bund had actually broken away from the RSDLP, is well indicated in the second article. The key question was that of the participation of the Bund in the Organising Committee, which had supposedly been cast into doubt following the mislaying of a request to send delegates addressed to the Jewish organisation. In reality, this 'accident' can only be regarded as the product of a much deeper problem, namely the manoeuvring by both the Bund*

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4 See Chapter 13, Resolution 15.

5 At this stage, this would have included: the RSDLP, the Bund, the Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania and the Labour Party of Finland. Lenin examines the manifesto of a League of Armenian Social Democrats in one article from this period (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 324–7), but as the article makes clear, the Armenian League considered itself part of the RSDLP.

6 See Chapter 13 (Resolution 15) and *Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza* 1970, p. 41 and p. 43.

7 Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 225.

and Iskra since the decision to form a cross-factional Organising Committee at the gathering in Belostock in March 1902. As has already been noted, the delay of around seven months before the first meeting of this committee can only partially be explained by the depletion of the various forces formally declaring their support for it as a result of arrests. Equally, if not more influential, was the desire of Iskra to consolidate its own factional forces in order to prevent the committee being dominated by the coalition – the Bund, Iuzhnyi Rabochii and Rabochee Delo – which had organised the Belostock meeting with a view to establishing it as a second Party Congress. At the same time, it is likely that the Bund's failure to attend the Pskov meeting was a response to the ascendancy of an Iskra-Iuzhnyi Rabochii alliance, and that the Bund's subsequent decision to send a representative to the Organising Committee was motivated at least in part by the arrest of several of its pro-Iskra members immediately after the Pskov meeting, a fact which suggested that the balance of factional forces was about to be reset.

Behind these manoeuvres lay a fairly consistent and principled opposition to the promotion of racial segregation in the Social-Democratic movement on the part of Iskra, and an equally enthusiastic support for it on the part of the Bund. The Bund's status as a Social-Democratic organisation which served a racial group, rather than a specific geographical location, made it an anomaly, and in most areas the activists from all ethnic backgrounds joined the same RSDLP organisations. If the Bund were to continue to exist as an RSDLP organisation, some form of understanding had to be established between it and the rest of the Party regarding the Jewish members of the latter who did not want to join the Bund, and on the question of who had the right to approach Jewish workers where no organisation was particularly strong. In other words, there were elements of a demarcation dispute in the relationship between the two sides, something Iskra evidently judged to be disruptive to the Social-Democratic cause and potentially capable of damaging class-consciousness. In reply to these criticisms, the Bund seems to have taken the view that Jewish workers possessed separate interests compared to workers from other nationalities owing to the state's persecution of them, and that only a special Jewish organisation could represent these interests within the broader Social Democracy and in society as a whole. Gentile or integrated organisations could not do this effectively as they could not adopt the specifically Jewish-proletarian point of view, a criticism which seemed to imply that they were not properly equipped to fight anti-Semitism, owing to the presence of the phenomenon in the non-Jewish working class.

## Articles from *Poslednie Izvestia*

No. 105, 2nd Year  
28/15 January 1903

### Regarding a Certain Proclamation

The Ekaterinoslav Committee of the RSDLP recently issued an extraordinarily characteristic proclamation to 'Jewish workers'. The proclamation opens with a critical examination of the 'myth about the united and indivisible Jewish people, a tale being supported and circulated by the Zionists'. This Zionist 'myth' is refuted with reference: 1) to the strikes of the Jewish shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and leather-cutters in Ekaterinoslav; 2) to the dreadful situation of the Jewish workers working for Zionist employers in Ekaterinoslav and 3) to the activities of the Zionists – the tea merchant Vysotskii<sup>8</sup> in Odessa and the match manufacturer Zacchea in Dvinsk,<sup>9</sup> who turned to the police for help against their striking workers. This is all that the Ekaterinoslav Committee could find to say in their refutation of the 'myth' they examined. To the direct detriment of the goal it set itself – that of convincing the Jewish workers of the town of Ekaterinoslav of those socialists arguing that 'there is no united Jewish people but, as it were, two Jewish peoples' were correct – it hides from the reader a whole series of facts of prime importance, which could have really added credibility to its argument. It does not say a word about the fact that an organised Jewish workers' movement has already existed for 10 years; that the Jewish proletariat has formed itself into an independent political party, the 'Bund', which guides its economic and political struggle; that thousands of workers have joined the Bund in Lithuania, Poland and south-west Russia; that the Bund not only organises Jewish workers against the capitalists and the government but also leads a struggle with bourgeois tendencies within the Jewish community that hope to exert influence on the minds of the workers; that along with Ekaterinoslav, in Zhitomir and Berdichev, Jewish Social-

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8 Klonimus Vysotskii (1824–1904) was the founder of probably the best-known tea company in imperial Russia. Originally set up in Moscow, it still operates today in Tel Aviv as a family business, spelled Wizzotsky.

9 This refers to Solomon Iakoblevich Zaks (1842–1902), whose factory employed between six and eight hundred mainly female workers and was one of the the biggest employers in the town. Dvinsk was renamed Daugavplis in the 1920s and is now located in Latvia.

Democratic organisations exist who have joined the Bund and are carrying out work among the Jewish masses in these localities; that the Jewish workers have for a number of years conducted a liberation struggle arm-in-arm with the workers of the other nationalities populating Russia and so forth. Hiding all facts of this type from the reader, the Ekaterinoslav Committee finds itself in a sufficiently helpless position and when, for example, it needs to argue that 'the interests . . . of the Jewish labouring masses are identical to the interests of all the non-Jewish labouring masses', it alludes first and foremost to the politically free countries. 'Do we really not see', it says, 'how in all the developed countries workers of different nationality, language and religion have already for decades fought arm-in-arm against a common enemy, against owner-exploiters and their allies, governments hostile to the working class?' Then, as if by way of a secondary argument it adds, 'and have we not actually seen the same thing among ourselves in recent years?' The Ekaterinoslav Committee limits itself to these questions and 'worker Jews' remain in the dark regarding what 'we see among ourselves'. All that we find in the proclamation regarding this question are two passing remarks: 1) that in 'Greater Lithuania', 'several years ago, Jewish workers and Jewish women workers of the Zaks factory, around six hundred people, having been driven to desperation, held a strike' and that 2) 'throughout Russia the working masses have been roused, in the north and in the south, in the Pale of Settlement and in cold Siberia, workers are uniting and rallying under the banner of the RSDLP'. These observations can hardly open the eyes of 'worker Jews' to 'what we see among ourselves'.

It is possible that the Ekaterinoslav Committee will give us that very same classic answer which we were given on another occasion by the Editorial Board of *Iskra*: apparently, it was not 'obliged' to speak about the Bund. This answer, if it was given thus, whilst it would not testify to the presence of great political sense on the part of the Ekaterinoslav Committee, would only further emphasise what this whole proclamation was about, in other words, that our comrades in the Ekaterinoslav Committee have still not digested the idea of the necessity of a separate organisation for the forces of the Jewish proletariat and that, despite five too many years of the Bund's existence – an age sufficiently venerable for a Russian revolutionary organisation – they are all the same carried away by a 'senseless dream' of being somehow separate from it and make comical efforts to 'hide love and smoke', as with the present proclamation. This concealment is not only useless given that the Bund will not fade away, it is also directly harmful for that cause which the Ekaterinoslav Committee serves. We refer to that anti-Semitism which is discussed at length in the proclamation currently under discussion, and which does not attest to the orientation of the Ekaterinoslav Committee in this question. 'From Germany', we read, this

movement (anti-Semitism) migrated to other countries and everywhere found supporters among the bourgeois but not the working layers of the population'. This is a no less harmful 'myth' than the 'myth' of the Zionists about the 'united and indivisible Jewish people'. From whom is it hidden that anti-Semitism has also established roots in the working masses? If the Ekaterinoslav Committee has forgotten all the facts relating to this area then we will remind it of at least two facts, the most recent occurrence of which they will probably not have succeeded in erasing from their memory: the participation of workers in the Chenstokhov pogrom<sup>10</sup> and one circumstance accompanying the last strike of the typographers in Zhitomir; the employer brought in 12 Christian workers who occupied the places of the strikers and, with the blessing of the bosses, openly boasted that they would 'slaughter all the Yids' (see P.I. No. 100). Anti-Semitism undoubtedly has quite a few 'supporters' among the Christian working class and the Social Democracy still has a lot of work to do to overcome this evil. One of the means of struggle with anti-Semitism among workers would appear to be the distribution of accounts of struggle by the Jewish proletariat and, naturally, the Bund. It is time, finally, for our comrades in the Christian workers' organisations to kick the harmful habit of silence concerning the independent Jewish workers' movement or, bracing themselves, speaking about it whilst ignoring its inalienable apparatus – the Bund.

In the interests of the cause we will give the Ekaterinoslav Committee the comradely advice that they should reconcile themselves with the existence of the Bund: the Bund is one of those inevitabilities which one cannot jump over. The entire heroic effort of the Ekaterinoslav Committee to avoid this inevitability does not reduce the latter by one iota, but only harms our common Social-Democratic cause.



No. 106, 2nd Year

3 February (21 January) 1903

Recently, an 'Announcement of the Formation of an Organising Committee' was issued in Russia.<sup>11</sup> From this announcement, we discover that 'representatives of: the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle, the *Iskra* organisation and the

10 This refers to Częstochowa in modern-day Poland. A pogrom was carried out by elements among the local Polish Roman Catholic population in September 1902, but the attacks were suppressed by Russian troops.

11 See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 305–7.



*Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group have formed an “Organising Committee”, which has set the preparation of the conditions required for the calling of a Party Congress as its first and most urgent task’.

Unfortunately, and right from the beginning, ‘the initiators of unification’ undertook a series of actions which stood in sharp contradiction to the goal they set themselves. Details of these actions are described in the ‘Declaration’ of the Central Committee of the Bund regarding the ‘Announcement’, which is printed below. Whilst conducting negotiations with the Bund over its participation in a ‘conference’, ‘the initiators of unification’ has suddenly displayed abnormal haste and, not waiting for the end of negotiations, organised a ‘conference’ without it; furthermore, having entered into negotiations with the Bund about its participation in the ‘Organising Committee’, it has broken the promise given by its delegate and published the ‘Announcement’ without the knowledge and participation of the Bund; knowing the reasons which prevented the Bund from ‘responding to the invitation to send its representative to the Organising Committee’, it has provided the ‘Announcement’ with a footnote, in which ‘reasons unknown to us’ are spoken about.

The conduct of ‘the initiators of unification’ is so strange in this matter that we can find only one explanation: they were obviously guided in this by the wish to produce the impression that the Bund took an indifferent attitude towards a question of such first-degree importance as the ‘factual restoration’ of the Party. Concerning this wish, one has to say that it is, at the very least, ‘not good’, an evaluation with which we hope even the mildest people will agree. Nonetheless, and in spite of such strange behaviour on the part of ‘the initiators of unification’, the Bund is ready to offer them assistance in the cause they have taken upon themselves, ‘the preparation of the conditions required for the calling of a Party Congress’, a readiness which is expressed in the closing words of the ‘Declaration of the CC’.



### **Declaration Regarding the ‘Announcement of the Formation of an Organising Committee’**

In an ‘Announcement of the Formation of an Organising Committee’ there is a footnote which runs as follows: ‘The Bund was also invited to send its representative to the Organising Committee, but for reasons unknown to us the Bund did not respond to the invitation. We hope that the reasons for this were purely accidental and that the Bund will not delay sending its representative’.

Given that some of the expressions in this note could produce an incorrect impression of our attitude to the Organising Committee and the anticipated Congress of the Party as a result of their double-meaning, we consider it necessary to draw attention to the following. The reasons for the absence of our representative from the conference of those organisations named in the 'Announcement' were indeed purely accidental, but we are convinced that, with the employment of a little more effort, these 'accidental reasons' would not have prevented us from 'responding to the invitation to send our representative to the Organising Committee'. But this is by the bye. Essentially, we have the following to say. *Almost a month* after the above-mentioned conference, a delegate acting on behalf of the Organising Committee came to us, from whom we heard for the first time about both the conference which had taken place and the formation of an Organising Committee. Immediately the delegate told us about the decision of the Organising Committee to issue a corresponding 'Announcement' to organisations. It was pointed out to the delegate by our representative that if circumstances beyond our control had prevented us from participating in the conference, then to a certain degree our absence could be made up for through participation in the editing of the 'Announcement'. Accordingly, a promise was given to us by the delegate of the OC to send this 'Announcement' as a manuscript or, if in printed form, then before it was distributed. Unfortunately, the OC did not fulfil its delegate's promise and only now, several weeks after the publication of the 'Announcement', have we accidentally come across a copy of it.

Not having had the opportunity of expressing our views as to the tasks of the forthcoming Congress by means of personal participation in the conference, nor by means of participation in the editing of the 'Announcement', we feel obliged to make up for this omission – if only to a certain extent – in the present declaration. Putting to one side several organisational points of a controversial character contained in this 'Announcement', we will limit ourselves to pointing out just one thing. We entirely agree with the OC that 'the first attempt to form the Party was not crowned with success as the necessary elements for the foundation of a strong, united Social-Democratic Party were not yet present... so that we are all still faced with the same disorganisation as we were a year ago' because, incidentally, 'at the present moment a great task stands before the Russian<sup>12</sup> Social Democracy which... can perhaps only

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12 Here the quotation twice refers to '*rusaskaia sotsial-demokratiia*', the ethnically Russian Social Democracy, but the authors insert '*rossiiskaia*', followed by a doubting question mark, in parentheses, suggesting that the announcement should in fact have referred to the multi-ethnic Social Democracy of the Russian empire as a whole.

be carried out by the collective forces of all Russian Social Democrats united into one centralised, disciplined army'. It would seem that these positions enjoin us to draw just one correct conclusion, one which was not drawn by the OC. Given that the Party actually no longer exists, the forthcoming Congress should bear the character of a founding Congress and therefore the right of participating in it should belong to all Social-Democratic organisations existing in Russia, be they of Russian or of other nationality: along with the various Russian Social-Democratic organisations and the Bund, it is essential that the Social-Democratic organisations of the Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians etc. are represented. Only with the observation of this condition will the foundation of 'one centralised, disciplined army' – the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party – be possible.

This is what we wanted to draw to the attention of all Social-Democratic organisations in Russia and the Organising Committee. As regards our participation in the Organising Committee, we will send our representative without delay as soon as the OC undertakes the steps necessary for this.

Central Committee of the Bund, January 1903  
The Bund Press

## Letter of Ekaterina Alexandrova to Lenin, Krupskaya and Martov

*Ekaterina Mikhailovna Alexandrova (1864–1943) played an important role in the development of a grouping within Iskra that opposed Lenin at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. Previously a supporter of 'People's Will' and a participant in the Brusnev group – the Social-Democratic propaganda organisation active in St. Petersburg during the early 1890s – she was arrested in 1896 and exiled for five years. At the end of this period she joined the Iskra organisation and moved abroad. She was evidently respected by many of the Iskra leaders, including Lenin and Krupskaya because of her lengthy experience as an underground operative in both Populist and Social-Democratic organisations. Following the arrest of several Iskra supporters active in setting up the Organising Committee for the Second Congress, Martov and Lenin agreed to send her into Russia to carry out work in this body on behalf of Iskra late in 1902.*

*The letter printed here is a report to Lenin, Krupskaya and Martov on around five months of this underground work, and paints an uncomplimentary picture of disorganisation, infighting and passivity within the Russian Iskra organisation. Despite having apparently been sent into Russia on the authority of the Editorial Board, she seems to have been met with suspicion on the part of the official Iskra leadership in Russia, (Gleb and Zinaida Krzhizhanovskii in Samara and Friedrich Lengnik in or close to Kiev) in so far as she approached them for contacts and funds whilst urging more than formal participation on their part in the work of the Organising Committee. This request was rejected, probably owing to an ongoing concern regarding the ambiguous politics of Iuzhnyi Rabochii, which had declared its allegiance to Iskra the previous September,<sup>1</sup> yet had failed to fuse with the Iskra organisation in Russia, maintaining its own newspaper and organisational centre. In all probability, the Russian Iskra organisation was waiting for this situation to be clarified and its leadership may well have doubted the southerners' sincerity, believing the declaration of allegiance to be a ruse by which they could obtain contacts from Iskra through common work on the Organising Committee, contacts with which they could rebuild the circulation of their own newspaper.*

1 *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* No. 10, p. 18. For Lenin's response to this declaration, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 225–9 and Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 114–15 and pp. 120–2.

*This situation appears to have caused Russian Iskra to refrain from serious work on the Organising Committee, work which was considered a priority by Alexandrova.*

*At first, the representatives of Iuzhnyi Rabochii who had participated in the Pskov meeting<sup>2</sup> responded to this situation by continuing with the work of the committee largely independent of Iskra, producing a document which laid down a method for determining the composition of the Congress and circulating the document around the leading local organisation for comment and approval.<sup>3</sup> Alive to the dangers of thus being excluded from this type of work, Alexandrova, along with the close ally of Lenin, Petr Krasikov and Rozalia Samsonovna Halberstadt (1877–1940) then joined the Organising Committee as representatives of Iskra, apparently ignoring the preferences of the Iskra bureau in Russia.<sup>4</sup> In itself, this development would probably not have been opposed by Lenin and Martov, in so far as impatient remarks regarding the passivity of the Samara ‘bureau’ can be found in the correspondence of both during this period.<sup>5</sup> However, matters subsequently became problematic, owing to an evident difference in attitude towards the Organising Committee that emerged between Krasikov on the one hand, and Alexandrova on the other.*

*These differences are discussed in Alexandrova’s letter, in which she reveals a significant amount of sympathy towards Iuzhnyi Rabochii due to its efforts in the Organising Committee, and a corresponding disregard towards Iskra. Pointing to the passivity of the Russian leadership in relation to the organisation of the Second Congress, and to the indiscipline and inexperience of its rank-and-file membership, she at the same time criticises the Iskra newspaper for some very public polemics against the Bund, which are presented as disruptive to the committee’s work.<sup>6</sup> This criticism was at very least an important precursor to subsequent Martovite complaints about the dominance of the Iskra Editorial Board over the Russian ‘practical’ leadership – the Central Committee of the RSDLP – which appeared after the Second RSDLP Congress.<sup>7</sup> From these criticisms, Alexandrova seems to draw the conclusion*

2 For details of this meeting, see the introduction to Martov’s letters which make up Chapter 12 of the present collection. The announcement of the meeting can be found in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 305–7.

3 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 493–500.

4 This is strongly implied in Alexandrova’s letter.

5 See Chapter 12 in the present collection, the fourth excerpt and: Lenin, 1960–79, Vol. 34, p. 128 and pp. 137–8.

6 See below and Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 317–23 and pp. 328–34.

7 See Chapter 17 and Chapter 18 of the present collection.

*that the multi-factional Organising Committee, rather than either the journalistic or the organisational wing of the Iskra faction, should serve as the de facto leadership of the RSDLP up until the Congress, and that it should exert some degree of control over Party literature, including the Iskra newspaper. As can be seen from the letter, this suggestion was strongly resisted by Krasikov who, like Lenin, does not appear to see any incompatibility between sharp exchanges of view in print such as those which took place between the Bund and Iskra at the beginning of 1903, and a degree of practical co-operation on common institutions, such as the Organising Committee.*

*This clash between Alexandrova and Krasikov is significant in that it implies the existence of two distinct conceptions of Iskra-ism within the Organising Committee, the presence of which may well have contributed to the emergence of a 'Martovite' and 'Leninist' grouping at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. The first of these varieties, represented by Iuzhnyi Rabochii, Alexandrova and in all probability Halberstadt,<sup>8</sup> formally supported the views and programme of the Iskra newspaper, whilst opposing the Russian Iskra network as superfluous, and opposed the strategy of merging local RSDLP organisations with it. Thus they supported groups such as Iuzhnyi Rabochii maintaining their independent newspapers and apparatuses in the post-Second Congress period. At the same time, this Alexandrova-Iuzhnyi Rabochii grouping evidently opposed the idea of dividing political leadership between a Russian and an émigré centre, which had hitherto been evident in Lenin's thinking.<sup>9</sup> Instead, as was the case with the Iuzhnyi Rabochii newspaper, the grouping insisted that the RSDLP's central newspaper should be published in Russia under the direct supervision of the Central Committee, this Central Committee representing the supreme authority in the Party between Congresses and which would no doubt include supporters of Iuzhnyi Rabochii.*

*The second group, represented primarily by Krasikov and evidently supported by Lenin,<sup>10</sup> defended the editorial independence of the Iskra newspaper on the grounds that it had evolved into a primarily factional newspaper, which had the right to express its views and to agitate within the Party during the crucial period prior to the Second Congress, a period in which local RSDLP*

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8 Halberstadt was the wife of Viktor Krokmal, who was a leading supporter of Martov at the Second Congress of the RSDLP and who is identified as taking a notable conciliatory stance by Martov in his letters to Lenin of December 1902 (Chapter 12 of the present collection).

9 This is evident from Alexandrova's letter itself. For details of the 'Russian Centre', which was to exist alongside the émigré *Iskra* Editorial Board, see Chapter 11.

10 For evidence of Lenin's support for Krasikov, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 118–19.

organisations were nominating the delegates to represent them at the Congress. Attempts by an ad hoc body such as the Organising Committee to limit Iskra's rights in this regard were to be opposed on the grounds of freedom of expression and internal Party democracy. Moreover, if the Russian Iskra organisation had not demonstrated great energies in relation to the Organising Committee, this did not make it utterly superfluous: securing the support of local RSDLP organisations and persuading them to nominate pro-Iskra delegates remained a vital task which was yet to be completed. Iuzhnyi Rabochii bearing this in mind was to be urged to make clear its attitude towards the Iskra faction as a whole and not just the newspaper, the ideal situation being its voluntary fusion with both the newspaper and the Russian Iskra organisation. In the absence of such a step, it seems that the Krasikov-Lenin shade would be reconciled to allowing the southerners to expend their energy working on the Organising Committee whilst Iskra, freed from this responsibility, directed its efforts towards securing mandates to the Congress from local organisations. Therefore, in defending the Iskra Editorial Board, there did not actually appear to be any attempt on the part of Krasikov to subordinate the Organising Committee to it, at least at this stage, despite the subsequent accusations of the Martovites.

In this difference of opinion, the Lenin-Krasikov approach initially won predominance within Iskra. Perhaps wisely, when reprimanded by the Organising Committee for its polemics with the Bund, Lenin conceded the point, despite evident reservations regarding the rights the Organising Committee was granting itself.<sup>11</sup> However, this concession was probably made in the knowledge that the relatively weak organisational forces of Iuzhnyi Rabochii would not produce an effective campaign among the local organisations aiming to influence their nomination of Congress delegates, the likely consequence being a Congress dominated by more orthodox supporters of Iskra, who could easily overturn such limitations on freedom of expression within the Party.

In accordance with this expectation, only a tiny rump of Iuzhnyi Rabochii delegates were present at the Second RSDLP Congress,<sup>12</sup> with the effect that both their organisational preferences and their claims to positions on the Central

11 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, p. 153. An announcement from the Organising Committee appealing for an end to exchanges between the Bund and *Iskra* was carried in *Iskra* No. 37, p. 8.

12 According to Lenin, as well as the two delegates from the Editorial Board of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, the delegates of the Kharkov Committee both consistently supported *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. However, the minutes of the Second RSDLP Congress show that the two Editorial Board delegates were themselves divided on certain issues, including the first paragraph of the Party constitution, making their influence yet more insubstantial (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 19; Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 331).



*Committee were not taken so seriously, and in this respect Lenin's calculations appear to have paid off. This said, if Iuzhnyi Rabochii's organisational arguments concerning the subordination of the Iskra newspaper to a 'Russian' Central Committee were rejected out of hand by the RSDLP Congress as a whole,<sup>13</sup> they nonetheless appear to have gained a fairly powerful, if rather intangible, influence on the ideas of Martov and his co-thinkers, who wielded significant influence in the Party in the post-Congress period. Complaints about the excessive power of the Editorial Board became absolutely central to the Martovites' argument during their post-Congress campaign to change the composition of the Party's leading bodies, and in this sense it seems that Iuzhnyi Rabochii and Alexandrova did eventually come to exert quite a significant amount of influence on the future of the RSDLP, even if their candidates were not elected to the Central Committee at the Second Congress and the Iuzhnyi Rabochii newspaper was declared dissolved by the Second Congress.<sup>14</sup>*

*In concrete terms, the Martovite campaign also produced one small success for Alexandrova personally, as she was finally co-opted onto the Central Committee in November 1904. This co-option represented the last stage in the unusually protracted conflict over positions on the RSDLP's leading bodies that characterised the Party's post-Second Congress period, in which the Leninist victories in the election to these bodies at the Second Congress were overturned, step by step.<sup>15</sup> However, Alexandrova's sojourn in the Central Committee proved to be a brief one as she was arrested in Moscow in February 1905 during a raid on a Central Committee meeting, an event which removed her from political activity for a number of years and ensured that she played no role in the events of 1905–7. In 1912, she once again rose to prominence in the RSDLP through her co-operation with Trotsky's newspaper, Pravda, in a campaign to reunite the various factions of the RSDLP. However, these efforts ended in failure and she appears to have given up Social-Democratic activity for good at this point. Her views on the world war and the revolution therefore remain a mystery as, though by the mid-1920s she was reportedly working in a museum in St. Petersburg, nothing has so far been*

13 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 351–2.

14 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 409, p. 416.

15 The early stages of this process are described in Chapter 18 and the commentary to it. The struggle continued into the summer of 1904, by which time at least one key supporter of Lenin on the Central Committee had been arrested, whereas several others were looking to normalise relations with the 'Martovite' Editorial Board. These had tried to prevent Lenin agitating for a Third RSDLP Congress to put right what he perceived as a usurpation of power in the RSDLP by unelected leaders. Lenin eventually broke with the Central Committee on this issue, forming a new 'Organising Committee' dedicated towards preparing a new Congress.

*discovered about her later life.<sup>16</sup> She appears to have been married to the prominent Bolshevik journalist and Party historian, Mikhail Stepanovich Olminskii (1863–1933, real surname: Alexandrov), and this connection may have contributed to the silence in Soviet scholarship regarding her future career.*

## **E M Alexandrova to V I Lenin, N K Krupskaya and Iu O Martov**

*Not later than 19 May 1903. Received between 22 and 25 May, Kiev<sup>17</sup>*

Why, I have not carried out my promise have been silent as the dead! I did this entirely consciously and when, from time to time, I was taken by an urge to share with you my impressions, I suppressed it as a display of weakness and nerves. Why? For two basic reasons: 1) My observations were extremely limited up until most recently, and only now have I had the opportunity to broaden their range. 2) I was not able to say the least intelligent and decent thing about business or the people with whom I clashed on the first occasion of our meeting. This was so much the case that even now, the first month after my arrival back home, appears to me as some sort of formless nightmare. I confess that I was seized with despair and two weeks after my arrival I caught myself clearly thinking: 'if only they would arrest me!' At the same time, I knew that I would have to work with these people and therefore did not want to tell anybody, you included, what I was thinking about them and their business. And you, in reality, should be thankful to me for my silence – you would have discovered little, but the 'impression' would have been absolutely foul. I would

16 One useful, though brief, source of information about Alexandrova is an entry in the *Bolshaia biograficheskiiia entsyklopediia*, as well as the various documents in the present collection in which her name is mentioned. She did not take part in the debates at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, though she did attend as a non-voting delegate ('Stein'). However, she played an important role in the *Iskra* caucus meetings which took place at the Second RSDLP Congress, and this role is described by Pavlovich in Chapter 16, and is also discussed by Lenin: see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 19–34 (in which she features as 'N').

17 This note was evidently added to the letter by the compilers of the *Leninskii Sbornik*.

have had to write to you about people with whom you are in closer and more friendly relations than with me, and my impressions would only have attained the goal of adding just one more unnecessary grudge to those which already made up my share. The idea that my presence was not being met with full trust took away all possibility of writing. I kept quiet. Now, to speak about what happened costs nothing – only by the whim of fate did the situation produce so many unpleasant impressions. The reverse side of the medal is that I was not inclined to idealise the situation – on the contrary, it seemed to me very unattractive.

Later I modified my impressions, reducing my demands to individual people, putting each on their corresponding shelf and now I find that, fortifying myself with patience (a large dose) and gritting my teeth, work is possible and sometimes even good. This is how it would be if only we all understood how important unity of activity is, more and more unity, a little discipline and a plan of work placing obligations on everyone. I know that everybody, including me, is dissatisfied with Iuri,<sup>18</sup> but my dissatisfaction bears a somewhat different character to that of everyone else. I should first of all explain to you how Iuri came to occupy that position from which we are only now removing him. When I went to him in January, I heard the complaint that no-one from the Organising Committee wrote to him, that he did not know what they were doing or were preparing to do and that he was carrying out business at his own risk. After that I go to Zarin.<sup>19</sup> I ask why he does not write to the Bureau<sup>20</sup> and hear the answer: 'the Bureau belongs to Brutus<sup>21</sup> and I do not recognise any other. I did not participate in this appointment and I will not be writing to it'. As you well know, it was impossible to search out the other members of the Organising Committee using dogs at this time. I heard him out and decided to go over to local work. I did not hint at the fact that I was an agent to anybody. I only asked Iuri and Kurtz<sup>22</sup> if anybody had written to them anything about

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18 This is *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. An individual surnamed Levin ('Egorov', born 1873) and Vladimir Nikolaevich Rozanov (1876–1939) ('Popov'), the two *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* delegates to the Second RSDLP Congress, were very active on the Organising Committee. Both featured in the debate within the *Iskra* caucus concerning the make up of the Central Committee slate (see Chapter 16 for further details), but in the end neither was selected.

19 Lengnik.

20 This is probably the 'bureau' of the Organising Committee (made up of a representative of *Iskra*, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and the Bund) which was responsible for directing its activity, and not the bureau of the *Iskra* organisation in Samara. It seems that Lengnik's response here plays on the presence of these two similar-sounding institutions, and that he recognises the *Iskra* bureau as the sole source of authority.

21 This is seemingly the codeword for the Samara Bureau.

22 Also Lengnik.

me and received the answer 'no-one' from both of them. 'Nothing' settled in Ekaterinoslav. I was very glad that I did that. Two months there taught me a lot.

Only there did news unintentionally reach me of a war against Iuri which was, by the way, only expressed in the complete disregard of his existence. A less than ingenious war against people who had in their hands connections, money and the right to speak in the name of the Organising Committee. I declared, and let anyone try to dispute it, that all the influence the Organising Committee had acquired and all that had been done by it regarding the unification of the committees' views, at least on the organisational question itself – was done by Iuri and Martyn.<sup>23</sup> Not much was done and it was done badly, that is true, but I recommend silence to those who now take up the role of critics and that they immediately get down to work, in order to remedy that shameful inaction which, at the end of the day, is explained by a skill at handicraft work. The Organising Committee, with its full compliment of members, including that opposition which came out against Iuri, was occupied only with grumbling. I am not able to consider as 'work' the collection of money and trifling, all-consuming bother with some individual committee or other. If Iuri came to occupy the dominant position, if he, on the part of the Organising Committee and in its name, established more and more contacts and brought the half-dead back to life, then this is the fault of the *Iskra*-ites. At the decisive moment they proved to be not up to the task. They were not aware of the responsibility they had taken on, having issued only a 'modest' declaration. Moreover – no matter how unlikely this sounds – I am convinced that it did not occur to them that they had the responsibility of completing the work of the Organising Committee, and consequently absolutely nothing was done in that direction. Grumbling about Iuri, they at the same time gave him all the work. The fact is that if Iuri had not written the rules,<sup>24</sup> there would not have been any up to this point, nor would there have been any leaflets issued.<sup>25</sup> They were below par, of course, but why on earth did the opposition (three

23 Apparently, Levin and Rozanov respectively, Levin and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* as a whole sharing the same code name.

24 These appear to be the 'Rules of Representation' determining what sort of RSDLP organisations had the right to send delegates to the Second Congress (See Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 493–500).

25 The Organising Committee published a number of leaflets not directly related to its Congress-organising functions, reflecting the view held both by Lenin and the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* supporters that it was to act as a 'provisional Central Committee', much as the *Iskra* newspaper had acted as a 'provisional RSDLP central press organ' pending the election of official leading bodies at the Second RSDLP Congress. A selection of these leaflets can be found in: *Krasnyi Arkhiv* 1966, Vol. 59, pp. 19–27.

people)<sup>26</sup> not lift a finger and either write or supply something better? They were held back by their 'critical' minds. They themselves in reality did not know what to do and how it was necessary to proceed, and when it was clearly demonstrated to them that they had to act in the name of the Organising Committee, they screamed blue murder! It was impossibly stupid. And what of the politics of Iuri? First of all, I denied that Iuri had 'malicious intent' and calculating tactics. Both of them are *Iskra*-ites and are much more conscious than many of their colleagues, not wishing to be rude to them. In terms of organisational policy, they are *Iskra*-ites to the last detail. Their views on the programme are well known to you. But... Their first 'but' is that they separate *Iskra* from the *Iskra*-ites. I will not even start to tell you about the latter. The fact is that, in Russia, not only they have felt compelled to make this distinction. The *Iskra*-ites here are like dogs and I have met so many dozens of these curiosities that I simply do not know where to hide. Every airhead who can sum up the programme in one word – 'ardour' – cites *Iskra*. One committee declares that the normal number of members of a committee should be six and cites Lenin. Another denies the value of propaganda in general terms and again: 'Lenin says so'. In several committees, new people are not admitted because 'we need professional revolutionaries, as Lenin says, and you are recommending a person who has not worked for us at all so far'. However, I should point out that the *Iskra*-ites of the new formation only pour oil on a fire that was not lit by them: the root of the problem is the *Iskra* agents. I have personally had to listen to the questions: 'But are you not actually an agent? No? An ordinary *Iskra*-ite? That is an entirely different matter!' Iuri's second 'but' is *their* newspaper. They are both convinced of the need for an 'all-Russian popular newspaper' and that this newspaper should be none other than *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. Accordingly, he also works on this. Having obtained contacts in all the committees from the Organising Committee, and in the majority of cases having them anyway, he spoke about *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* being an all-Russian popular newspaper everywhere. If a section of the committees were earlier inclined to relate to this with suspicion, then after the declaration of solidarity with *Iskra* and the entry into the Organising Committee, this suspicion evaporated. They did not hide their dreams from us and, if you like, had grounds to think that they were in essence right. In the agreement with them, it seems that this question, if it had so much as been posed, was not resolved in the proper way. The matter was dealt with in a rough-and-ready fashion. Almost on the eve of the arrival of the *Iskra* plenipotentiary, they decided to yield and were to a huge degree defeated by haste and *softness*. To make representations

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26 Apparently, Krasikov, Krzhizhanovskii and Lengnik.

to them now that they should voluntarily hinder themselves is naive.<sup>27</sup> They mixed the work of the Organising Committee with that of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, but, as previously, what was done in order to prevent this mixing of work? They gave them all the contacts, the bureau,<sup>28</sup> and did not give them money. It was natural that one and the same person should at the same time speak with the committees about the Organising Committee and about *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. We could not exactly demand that they complete two journeys to one and the same place. The committees, unsurprisingly, started to get confused and some were certain that *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* was the publication of the Organising Committee. 'They did not have the right to use our contacts'? Nonsense. As members of the Organising Committee, they had that right. They took them over as 'entirely theirs', giving instructions to the bureau, telling them to work. And they did work. One of two things happened: either they threw away some stuff owing to a low level of consciousness, or they closed their eyes to the possible consequences. But in either case it was necessary for us to get to work and to do it our way. But what do we see? This is what. After the February Congress, they suddenly asked for me. Just as earlier, for an unknown reason, they kept me at a respectful distance, at this point and for equally unknown reasons, they plunged into a relation of complete trust with me. 'Save the Fatherland!' Very well. 'We will help': better still. After this, I wrote for three weeks, begged people to come, to give money and to really 'help'. Not a squeak in reply. There is money – I know. They did not give it to Iuri – 'we do not trust him'. Then why not give it to me? What kind of 'work' is possible without money, without the means of travelling around the place? Regarding this, I was approached by the transport group about money.<sup>29</sup> But you realise that I am not Iuri and I do not have my own work. It is physically impossible for me to accomplish all the work on my own. On my own initiative, I borrowed money and went on a tour with the Congress agenda and general questions

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27 This refers to a visit by Trotsky and Lengnik to meet with *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* in the autumn of 1902, the result of which was the 'southerners' declaring their support for *Iskra*. However this declaration evidently did not imply, in *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*'s view, an organisational merger involving the dissolution of the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* title and its apparatus into *Iskra*. Consequently, and despite the 'declaration' published in *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* No. 10, the paper continued its separate existence and it seems to have acquired the ambition of becoming a second official RSDLP newspaper alongside *Iskra* which would be written in a more popular style. This was evidently viewed with suspicion by some *Iskra* supporters, who saw an unhelpful division of forces in these plans.

28 Presumably the *Iskra* bureau.

29 Presumably this means that the transport group of *Iskra*, a body responsible for moving literature and personnel around the country, offered Alexandrova money.

concerning the future. I 'sent an agent' because you cannot find members of the Organising Committee. Very soon, I arrived in the north. Ignatius would remain in my place and I told him that he 'ought to' find himself a permanent place of residence.<sup>30</sup> For the moment he is stationary, though what will happen next I do not know because, in my turn, I have received a statement from him that he has 'granted me leave' for a week, and that if I do not return, then he will leave. There is no need for him to go anywhere; he is just bored of staying in one place after two-and-a-half months of footloose existence. I, of course, cannot manage to get around the north and the west in a week and will return no earlier than the second week. And he, of course, is not going anywhere in a week. I am telling you about this episode so that you understand how business is going with us. I am decisively in favour of Ignatius, if not Clair,<sup>31</sup> staying with the bureau. In the first place, I do not want to take on all the responsibility alone, and secondly, I find there to be no sense in the travels of Ignatius. Thirdly, I, as a bearer of a certain heresy, should receive corrective treatment. In other words, o luckless hour, the Fatherland once again proves to be 'in danger'. I would rather not be reminded of it. My dream is to get three people together here and, with them, reduce the number of cliques. Up to now, there are no more members than there are independent expeditions and independent staffs. Everybody gives out orders and carries out, or at least tries to carry out, plans without consulting anybody. Only the purely spontaneous thirst of the committees for some kind of intelligent leadership and their predisposition to submit can explain the fact that they close their eyes to the disorder in the Organising Committee, which will soon begin to tell on them.

Let us speak about the Bund. We (Iuri and I) have not made our peace with them. We merely refrain from trying to smash their teeth in come what may – this is the speciality of Ignatius. I was present at that meeting, the result of which is known to you (the declaration).<sup>32</sup> Ignatius, as usual, was late and therefore we, I repeat, did not trade shop-floor expressions, but sharply and clearly posed the question of federalism and autonomy, of nationalism and of the right of the Bund to open up shop in locations where a committee already exists. As regards your principled polemic with the Bund, it was

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30 This is Krasikov, a 'flying' *Iskra* agent who lived illegally and lacked a permanent address whilst working on the Organising Committee.

31 Krzhizhanovskii.

32 This would appear to be the statement by the Central Committee of the Bund criticising the circumstances in which the Organising Committee was re-established in October 1902 and which was printed in *Poslednie Izvestiia* No. 106. A translation of this article is included in Chapter 14 of the present collection.



declared that we entirely subscribed to it. Concerning the first two questions, the Bund declared that 'we cannot decide this before the Congress', in relation to the second they lost their bearings and asked us to 'show what harm' they were causing. It was shown them. Now, on my own initiative, I have advised three committees to give the Bund an ultimatum: 'either close your organisation in those towns where there are committees, or face war'. We are granting them a meeting with a member of their Central Committee and we will see what comes of it. One committee has already prepared 'a reply to the Bund' which, in the case of the Central Committee not conceding, will be sent to you for printing.

Back to the meeting. The Bundists insisted that the Central Committee was not responsible for the activity of the Foreign Committee,<sup>33</sup> but we told them that we would only take this type of announcement seriously when it was printed. On the second day, Ignatius arrived and started something ugly. I only heard: 'You are lying', 'No, you are lying'. I swear it's not me that knows who was telling the truth! The attempt to find an explanation ended in complete fiasco. Personally, I found that the only way to put an end to the public exchange of civilities was the one we chose. The mistake was to publish Ignatius's letter.<sup>34</sup> When I laid into the Bundist for his letter<sup>35</sup> as a breach of organisational discipline, he quickly conceded to my suggestion of issuing a printed reprimand to it for precisely this reason – after a furious, but brief resistance, he conceded. But at this point, Ignatius got going! And this on the basis of the merest hint that the Organising Committee had the right to *demand* of its members that they do not publish in the press without its knowledge and agreement, with the announcement that 'no such principle exists', that he 'has for the first time heard that the organisation can prevent one of its members from "defending his honour" and that this question still needs to be discussed'. You write that 'you were standing up for our honour', whereas I find that you should not

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33 *Poslednie Izvestiia* was the news sheet of the Foreign Committee of the Bund, its émigré section, and it was in this publication that the polemics with *Iskra* were printed. These words suggest that the Bund's representative on the Organising Committee wanted to deny responsibility for these polemics.

34 This was probably an unsigned communication appearing in *Iskra* No. 33, p. 7, part of a fairly long-running public exchange between *Iskra* and the Bund concerning the latter's attitude to both the Organising Committee and the broader question of whether Social-Democratic organisations specific to one ethnic group should be allowed to exist. The author of the communication protested that the Bund was invited to the meeting at which the work of the Organising Committee was restarted.

35 It is not clear which 'letter' is referred to here, though it is evidently part of the ongoing debate mentioned in the previous note.

have done this. You should have left it to us to stand up for it. Finally, I reckon that the attempt was carried out with defective means and that our honour would not have suffered any harm if we had avoided the polemic on our organisational activity. The public violation of organisational discipline, the declaration in the full light of day of internal discord, the letters of Ignatius and the Bundist – this is what insulted the honour of the Organising Committee. The watchword of Ignatius and (he says) you is: ‘to hell with the Bundist’. I simply don’t understand. Why, in this case, drag him into the Organising Committee? To observe formalities? I don’t understand. I think that it was either not at all necessary to reckon with formal considerations, or necessary to observe them right up to the Congress. Otherwise, the result is some kind of petty-politicking, the goal of which I cannot see. The Bundist does not hinder us. Formally, for example, we do not have the right to put pressure on the committees in the name of the Organising Committee, even on the question of solidarity with *Iskra*. We are doing this, and the Bundist perfectly well knows it, but remains quiet and does not dare to open his mouth about it. I got the impression that he will do much (but not everything) just to remain on the Organising Committee. I very well understand why this is necessary for him. His presence in the Organising Committee gives him the possibility of taming rebellious organisations: ‘you see, we are not at all isolated from Russia and we are working together’. The announcement of the committees (ultimatum) paralyses the harmful influence to our name of such a covering manoeuvre.<sup>36</sup> We will prepare the committees and familiarise them with the Bund, and if you now release a series of articles on the questions of nationalism, federalism and autonomy – the Bund’s goose will be sufficiently cooked by the time of the Congress.

In March, a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Socialist Party<sup>37</sup> unexpectedly descended on me. One of the comrades, carried away by a

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36 The Bund’s policy of establishing purely Jewish organisations in areas where multi-racial, ‘integrated’ Social-Democratic organisations already existed proved controversial during this period, and was perceived as extremely divisive by supporters of *Iskra* and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*. The ‘rebellious organisations’ were presumably those local RSDLP organisations whose influence was being challenged by this policy of the Bund. Details of their ‘ultimatum’ have not been located, but it seems likely that it would have demanded an end to the Bund, establishing racially specific branches in new locations.

37 The Polish Socialist Party was founded in 1892 in Paris. The following year, it approved a radically democratic minimum programme, which included the demand for an independent Polish state and extensive labour rights. However, there was a leftist split from the organisation the following year in the form of the Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland, which opposed the creation of a Polish state and in which Rosa Luxemburg

passion for purely 'material' tasks, had sent them some unimportant fellow with a request for 'help'. The unimportant fellow, to sound more important, thundered that a member of the Organising Committee had sent him. I did not know that his appearance had been provoked by this and I was taken aback at first when he declared to me that the Central Committee had agreed to help in principle, but considered it necessary 'to agree on principles from the start'. However, we resolved the matter very quickly. I made apologies for the mistake to which they had been led, even though it was not our fault, as it was made in our name, and said that the question of help was out of place, that I was not in a position to 'make agreements', but that I agreed to 'speak about principles'. It seems that, from their perspective, the appeal to them for help came across as a 'positive symptom', in the sense that we had changed our attitude towards them. They considered the *Zhizn'* group<sup>38</sup> to be the first fruit of this change and hoped that a second would be found in Russia in the person of the Organising Committee, and in conclusion inquired about 'what will happen after the Congress', what sort of 'convictions' and origins the Organising Committee had, and its tasks. . . .<sup>39</sup> should not start to work out an agreement 'on transport questions'. I answered literally as follows. A practical agreement with no matter whom was the business of the future Central Committee of the RSDLP – the Organising Committee had appeared in accordance with the decision of a conference made up of such-and-such organisations. Its task was the organisation of a Congress of representatives from organisations of the RSDLP and to issue leaflets on general questions and its convictions were the programme of 1898. A representative of the Bund had entered the Organising Committee. As for the convictions of the members of the Organising Committee, excluding the Bund, we were anti-federalists and anti-nationalists just as, recognising the programme of 1898 as fundamental, we belonged to the tendency in Social Democracy represented by *Iskra* and *Zaria*. As far as I knew, the opinion on the PSP in Russia had not changed and

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played a leading role. At first glance, it might seem that the RSDLP should have been more sympathetic to the PSP on this issue which divided these two organisations, as both the RSDLP and the PSP supported the right of Poland to self-determination. However, the PSP increasingly took on the identity of a Populist rather than a Marxist organisation, and as a result it was the Polish Social Democrats who proved closer allies to the RSDLP, despite clear differences on the national question.

38 A monthly journal of the 'Legal Marxists', including Struve and Tugan-Baranovskii. It was published in St. Petersburg from 1897–1901 before being suppressed and moving to London, where six issues appeared in 1902. Lenin was among the contributors, especially on questions relating to the agrarian economy.

39 There is a break in the letter here.

there was no follower of *Zhizn'*, which did not itself appear to be a going concern. We parted very courteously and he asked that I did not close off access to the Organising Committee to him: 'perhaps it will be necessary for us to tell you something'. And I gave my gracious agreement.

So, now my heresy steps forward into the spotlight. We have not worked out the Congress agenda, but only drawn up a list of problems which we will submit to Congress for resolution. I am decisively against *two centres*. There should be just one centre – the Central Committee – and the press organ should be attached to it. Congress will decree the existence of a Central Committee and a press organ and will work out instructions for the Organising Committee<sup>40</sup> and the press organ and elect four people to the Central Committee, giving them the responsibility of organising the Central Committee and the Editorial Board of the press organ. At this point, the role of the Congress will cease. The business of the four elected people is to rearrange relations within the Central Committee. On this question we have fought with Ignatius just as the Organising Committee has been cut in half by this question, whilst deciding to avoid answering it before the committees.

It is time to finish. Tell me, who is considered to be the representative (in the Organising Committee) of the Russian *Iskra* organisation?

You, of course, will be dissatisfied and discontented with this letter. So be it.

Here is one more little illustration of our customs. Ignatius and Adele,<sup>41</sup> having received your May leaflet, ordered that it be printed with the heading '*Iskra* and the Organising Committee'. Ignatius bumped into me after this and didn't let a word slip about how he 'gave orders'. He said only that they had sent it to me immediately. I only received it on the 9 [22] April. I handed it to the committee so that it could publish it with your signature alone. It never even entered my head to add another 'Organising Committee', when there are already two leaflets from this committee, adopted by four members of the Organising Committee. Now we have a right mess. I have quarrelled and quarrelled but, crucially, questions are always debated when to speak about them is already useless – the business is done, and the debate will be forgotten about until next time.

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<sup>40</sup> This should probably read 'Central Committee'.

<sup>41</sup> This appears to be Boris Isaakovich Goldman (1874–1937), an *Iskra* supporter at this stage and subsequently a Menshevik. He was the brother of the well-known Bund leader Mikhail Isaakovich Liber (1880–1937) who was the Jewish organisation's leading spokesman at the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

They are looking for 'Queen' in Moscow.<sup>42</sup> Where on earth is she? I recommend Kostia,<sup>43</sup> you will agree with her about everything and can interrogate her thoroughly about everything. She is a sweet and energetic person. Please send the addresses. Did you receive my letter through Stortz?<sup>44</sup> You will find out about the passport from Kostia.

All the best. Do not be too angry at me. It is harmful. My heresy is entirely my own responsibility.

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Since the time when I wrote to you, events have taken place. . . .<sup>45</sup> wrote a blatantly impertinent letter which will bring about retribution. During these three days, my conviction that we were getting along with Ignatius *relatively* peacefully has been slightly shaken. He is to such a degree habituated to a separate policy, as I categorise his method of activity, and to 'independence', according to his definition, that I had to issue an ultimatum to him, though not until I had exhausted the means I considered exclusively loyal. Kostia will tell you about it. In general, I recommend that you question him in great detail. He knows everything, but is too shy. Draw attention to the fact that she (like me) 'does not love' Ignatius and introduce a few modifications, but not of a factual nature.<sup>46</sup>

Find out from him about the pamphlet.

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42 The identity of this person is not clear.

43 This could be Rozalia Halberstadt, another 'soft' *Iskra*-ite who appears to have served on the Organising Committee.

44 The identity of this person has not been established.

45 Another break in the manuscript occurs here.

46 The 'shy' person here could be 'Kostia', whose codename is male but who in reality appears to be female, hence the inconsistent use of personal pronouns. 'Ignatius' was evidently anything but shy.

## Pavlovich, *Letter to Comrades about the Second RSDLP Congress*

*Petr Krasikov was heavily involved in the organisational development of Russian Marxism during its early years and was subsequently a prominent functionary in the Soviet system. Originally from Krasnoyarsk in Siberia, where he acquired revolutionary sympathies whilst still at school, he started university in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1891, first of all studying mathematics, but soon switching to law. He was introduced to Gleb Krzhizhanovskii in his first year and soon set up a workers' study circle, whilst at the same time reproducing Marxist pamphlets using an illegally-held hectograph and a typewriter. The following year he went to Switzerland to meet with the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and returned with a large amount of illegal literature, which led to his arrest. He spent a year in St. Petersburg's Peter-Paul fortress and a further four confined to his home town as an exile, where he met the similarly exiled Lenin in 1896.<sup>1</sup> Briefly returning to St. Petersburg after his term was completed, Krasikov was soon rearrested and this time sent to Pskov at about the time Lenin, also recently liberated, was there negotiating with Petr Struve and Mikhail Tugan-Baranovskii over the foundation of Iskra.<sup>2</sup> Failing on this occasion to renew his acquaintance with Lenin, Krasikov appears to have remained in the town for the next two years awaiting sentence, where he helped establish a support group for Iskra.*

*Though Krasikov does not seem to have done much in the year that followed, in the summer of 1902 he appears to have taken on an 'illegal' existence which involved absconding from his latest place of exile, living with false papers and a good deal of travelling around the country. The main purpose of these journeys was, on the one hand, to secure resolutions from local RSDLP organisations in support of the Organising Committee,<sup>3</sup> of which he was a member, and on the other, the nomination of pro-Iskra delegates to the Second Congress itself. However, public declarations of support for Iskra as the central Party newspaper, funds and*

1 Lenin did not serve his term of exile in Krasnoyarsk but in Shushenskoe, a small village several hundred miles south of the city.

2 See Chapter 5, footnote 7 for details of this incident.

3 This was the body that prepared the Second Congress of the RSDLP. For information about its composition and activity, see Chapters 13, 15 and 16 of this collection.

*all the other organisational aims laid out in the resolutions of the January 1902 Iskra Congress in Samara<sup>4</sup> were also evidently pursued. Thus, especially during late 1902 and the early months of 1903, a steady stream of announcements could be found in Iskra, expressing support either for the paper itself, the Organising Committee or both on the part of local RSDLP organisations.<sup>5</sup>*

*Krasikov attended the Second Congress as the representative of the Kiev Committee, though there is no reason to assume from this that he was actually a member of the body which had chosen him. He played a significant role in proceedings from the beginning, reading a very detailed report on behalf of the Organising Committee, showing how the composition of the Congress had been arrived at and establishing the representative credentials of the meeting.<sup>6</sup> In the split among the Iskra-ites, he proved to be a firm supporter of Lenin, but despite his evident prowess as a practical leader, his name did not appear on any slate for either of the leading bodies, possibly owing to accusations on the part of colleagues in the Organising Committee, Alexandrova in particular, that his behaviour had been divisive. Instead, with the flaring up of the conflict between the Leninists and the Martovites in the post-Congress period, he was sent into Russia to present the case of the former group to the committees.*

*He did not successfully carry out this assignment, owing to his arrest in Berlin, where he was charged with having false papers, a development which could have led to him being handed over to the Russian authorities. He succeeded in disentangling himself from these difficulties with the help of the German Social Democrats and was eventually assigned the easier task of presenting the Leninist position to émigré colonies in several cities, including Geneva, Zurich, Heidelberg and Brussels. One surviving artefact from this campaign is the pamphlet, A Letter to Comrades about the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which was published in early 1904.*

*This pamphlet, along with Lenin's Account of the Second Congress of the RSDLP and One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, represents an important eyewitness account of events at the Second Congress and, like them, is valuable*

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4 See Chapter 11.

5 See *Iskra* No. 26, p. 7 (St. Petersburg, Moscow); *Iskra* No. 28, p. 8 (Kharkov); *Iskra* No. 30, p. 8 (Nizhnii-Novgorod); *Iskra* No. 31, p. 8 (Saratov, Odessa); *Iskra* No. 34, p. 6 (Northern Union), *Iskra* No. 35, p. 8 (Don Committee, Siberian Union, Kazan, Ufa); *Iskra* No. 37, p. 8 (Tula, Irkutsk, Odessa). *Iskra* No. 34, p. 6 contains declarations of support for the Organising Committee from the Moscow, Ekaterinoslav, Don, Odessa, Kiev, Kharkov, Nikolaev and Northern organisations of the RSDLP, in addition to those local organisations (St. Petersburg, the Bund, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*), who actually sent delegates to the committee.

6 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 28–35.



*because it covers not only the debates taking place in the official sessions of the RSDLP, which are recorded in a stenographic report,<sup>7</sup> but also debates within the Organising Committee and the Iskra factional caucus which seem to have played a central role in the split among the Iskra supporters. Apart from this, the Pavlovich document refers to some of the meetings and discussions which took place among delegates immediately prior to the Congress, which are not discussed in either of the accounts written by Lenin.*

*Pavlovich's account provides a number of important new insights into the Second Congress and the circumstances surrounding it. He begins his account with a discussion around the controversial first paragraph of the Party constitution, and makes the quite original argument that Martov's formula, though it was phrased in terms of the rights and responsibilities of individual members, would in fact have an effect on Social-Democratic organisations considering themselves to be either part of, or close to, the RSDLP. Pavlovich states that the Martov formula allows for the existence of Social-Democratic organisations that are 'independent' of the Party and, as such, are not integrated into, or accountable to, its united all-Russian apparatus, but which are nonetheless made up entirely of individuals who can be considered Party members owing to their individually proffered 'regular assistance' to one part or another of this official apparatus. The significance of such an arrangement is that it allowed groups such as the Martovite faction, along with those such as the Union Abroad, 'Struggle' and Rabochee Delo, which were declared dissolved at the Second Congress, to continue their existence in precisely this form so that, even if these organisations were no longer considered part of the RSDLP, their members would all remain Party members with full rights. This was regardless of their failure to properly join a part of the official apparatus, a step which would ensure that the resolutions 'dissolving' their organisations were observed in reality. With some justification, Pavlovich observes that such opposition organisations would be everywhere regarded as part of the RSDLP, even though they would be able to argue that they were not subject to any obligations, nor to the demands of Party discipline, any more than they be bound by the decisions of the Second Congress, as these organisations were not formally part of the Party. In other words, he indicates that Martov's formulation served as a loophole in Lenin's constitution, which would be of use to the anti-Iskra groupings in the RSDLP.*

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7 These minutes have been translated into English in their entirety. See Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978. This edition is used in all the citations of the minutes in the present collection.

*Having noted these differences, Pavlovich nonetheless argues that the disagreement over the first paragraph of the rules was not the main cause of the split between the two sections of Iskra and, echoing Lenin's representation of the matter, refers instead to a struggle taking place over a series of four Iskra factional caucuses concerning the faction's slate for the Central Committee, a slate which, given the Iskra supporters' majority at the Congress (33 out of 51 votes), was expected to win the election. Pavlovich himself, defending the Leninist position, emphasises the need for continuity between the policy of the Russian Iskra organisation and the new Central Committee, implying that leading figures in the former should make up the slate. He then states that Martov wanted, on the one hand, to base the Central Committee slate on broader forces, including a representative of Iuzhnyi Rabochii, and on the other to prevent representatives of the Russian Iskra organisation<sup>8</sup> from possessing too much influence in the slate, preferring to nominate figures such as Trotsky and Krokmal, who had spent most of the recent period in the emigration, or Alexandrova, whose opposition to the Russian Iskra organisation seems to have led to her resignation from the group early on in the Congress.*

*Alongside the composition of the Central Committee slate, disagreements over the make up of the new Editorial Board of Iskra are presented as contributing to the split within the Iskra faction. Whilst this factor is also acknowledged by Lenin, in so far as he too describes Martov as insisting on the reappointment of the 'old' editorial of six people rather than the election of a new trio, in spite of his consent to new elections in the pre-Congress period, Pavlovich develops this account with the casual revelation that, in the immediate pre-Congress period, he himself had been co-opted as a seventh member of the Editorial Board in an attempt to resolve conflicts within it. This observation, which is corroborated by both Krupskaya and in the minutes of the Second Congress of the League Abroad,<sup>9</sup> seems to significantly dent the arguments of the Martovites, who had argued that the reappointment of the six represented continuity in the leadership of the Party. Apart from*

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8 This was the Russian branch of the *Iskra* faction which had been founded in January 1902 and whose headquarters were in Samara. This, of course, was not the only organisation which supported the *Iskra* newspaper, others being the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad, the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and arguably *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* after August 1902. Consequently, a pro-*Iskra* Central Committee could have reflected the influence of the Russian *Iskra* Organisation to a greater or lesser degree without ceasing to be body controlled by *Iskra* supporters.

9 Smidovich 1904, p. 17. For details of this meeting, see Chapter 18 and the commentary to it. Lenin also notes the fact of Pavlovich's joining the Editorial Board, citing the pamphlet translated below: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 215.

that, Pavlovich gives a quantitative illustration of the degree of participation in the work of the paper on the part of those who were nominally editors, proving that to all intents and purposes, Zasulich, Starover<sup>10</sup> and Axelrod were not making important contributions to its columns.

Apart from these arguments, which develop and add detail to those made by Lenin in his own accounts of the Second Congress, Pavlovich's pamphlet gives some interesting insight into some of the key personalities in the RSDLP at this time and the Leninists' attitude to them. Trotsky is portrayed as lacking in political stability, owing to his capacity to defend a position 'foaming at the mouth,' which he later comes to regret. However, Pavlovich seems to regard these displays as rather more comical than threatening and he directs rather more scorn against David Riazanov, at this stage a figure in the tiny 'Struggle' group,<sup>11</sup> and many years later the founder of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, in which capacity he brought about the publication of Marx's Paris Manuscripts and The German Ideology.

The reasons for Pavlovich's negative attitude towards Riazanov were probably based in the latter's apparent defection from Iskra and temporary adherence to the Union Abroad following the appearance of Lenin's article, 'Where To Begin?', in April 1901.<sup>12</sup> At the time, Plekhanov had explained this episode as being motivated by a desire for a position on the Editorial Board of Rabochee Delo, as Riazanov had not been offered one by Iskra. Riazanov was thus alleged to have defected to Rabochee Delo in search of such a post and to have created 'Struggle' only when he was rejected a second time, possibly because he had also published a lengthy polemic against Rabochee Delo in Zaria.<sup>13</sup> It is hard to tell whether this is a fair representation of Riazanov's actions from the available evidence, but his reputation as a rather egotistical place-seeker appears to have been established to such a degree by the time of the Second Congress that Pavlovich at one point uses his name as if it were a byword for this kind of behaviour.

Another curious feature of Pavlovich's account, one which is possibly related to his vilification of Riazanov, is his tendency to posit the existence of opponents

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10 Alexander Potresov, who adopted the pseudonym 'Starover' at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. In most of the remaining documents in this collection he is referred to by this name.

11 See the commentary to Chapter 8 for more details on the origins of this group and Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 479–85 for an account of the group's activities by one of its members.

12 See the commentary to Chapter 8.

13 See Zaria No. 1 pp. 118–36. Sections of this article are cited by Martynov in 'Exposure Literature and Proletarian Struggle', Chapter 10 in the present collection.

at the Congress who were not actually present. Characteristically, he more than once refers to the presence of 'Struggle' supporters at the Congress, a claim which is not found in either of Lenin's accounts<sup>14</sup> and which would seem to be undermined by the fact that, during a lengthy debate on whether Riazanov or another representative of the group should be invited to the Congress, nobody mentioned the presence of such forces. Quite the contrary, one figure in the Organising Committee, Levin of Iuzhnyi Rabochii, claimed to have never heard of the group prior to his late arrival at the Congress and in the correspondence of 'Struggle' to the Organising Committee (most of which did not reach its destination), the group's representative casually admits to a complete lack of organised support inside Russia.<sup>15</sup> It is therefore tempting to conclude that, rather like some of the figures in the letters of Martov reproduced above,<sup>16</sup> Pavlovich greatly exaggerates the influence of perceived enemies, assuming that they had decisively won over those delegates Lenin merely regarded as non-aligned. It is of course intriguing to speculate on the significance of this habit of thought in a figure who went on to be a senior figure in the Soviet legal system during the notably paranoid purges, terror and shows trials of the 1930s, but given the sketchy information about Krasikov's later career, such links can only remain speculative for the time being.

Regarding his later career, it seems that Krasikov remained in the emigration until the 1905 uprising, at which point he returned to Russia and participated in the St. Petersburg Soviet during October of that year. During 1905–7 he spent two spells in prison before finally completing his legal studies and practising law in St. Petersburg from 1908, specialising in political and labour-movement cases. With the revolution in February 1917 he was once again involved in the Soviet structures and became a notable figure in the Bolshevik Party, serving in the Petrograd Duma and the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, and he subsequently obtained work in the People's Commissariat of Justice. From then on he became a leading Soviet functionary, serving in a variety of posts, including the Supreme Court. Details are unclear, but it appears that he died from natural causes.

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14 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 19–34 and pp. 201–423 ('Account of the Second Congress of the RSDLP', *One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back*).

15 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 480.

16 Chapter 12 of the present volume.

## Letter to Comrades about the Second Congress of the RSDLP

*Pavlovich*

Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party

*Workers of All Countries Unite!*

The Party Press, 27 Rue de la Coulouvrenière, Geneva, 1904

For reasons beyond my control, I was unable to write to you personally about the Congress immediately after it had taken place. Because the minutes have now been published,<sup>17</sup> I will limit myself to a clarification of the most important events, both those which took place at the Congress itself and those closely linked to it, so that you can make sense of the position of the *majority* to which I belong. This is very important given the great volume of misinterpretation and falsely presented facts being spread by the so-called *minority* in order to justify their boycott tactic and an obdurate struggle which has lasted for months, a struggle whose basis has nothing in common with a struggle over principles.

Congress condemned with one voice the federative ambitions of the Bundists and by a large majority voted to adopt the Party programme and the constitution. Almost all resolutions were adopted unanimously or with an overwhelming majority of votes. The only somewhat principled question that separated the *Iskra*-ites was §1 of the Party constitution. The commission for working out the constitution presented Congress with two formulae defining Party membership. Comrade Martov's formula read: 'all who recognise the programme and offer it assistance under the supervision of a Party organisation are considered Party members'. Lenin's formula ran: 'all who recognise the programme and personally participate in one of the Party's organisations ...'.<sup>18</sup>

Comrade Martov's formula seems to me to have taken a step towards opportunism. On the one hand, it proposes the recognition of the Social-Democratic programme as if to exclude the possibility of non-Social-Democratic elements entering the ranks of the Party; on the other, it aims to count as Party members – by means of awarding them this title – elements such as professors, gymna-

<sup>17</sup> All the evidence suggests that this took place in December 1903 on the authority of the RSDLP Central Committee. The place of publication was Geneva.

<sup>18</sup> Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 10, p. 511.

sium schoolboys and similar people who do not wish to, or who are afraid to, join or to constitute a Party organisation, however *loose*.<sup>19</sup>

The formula of Comrade Martov concerning whole organisations seems to me to be still more untenable. If some organisation of 'independents' 'recognises' the programme and the supervision of one of the Party organisations, and through this grants the right of calling themselves members of a Social-Democratic Party to every individual 'independent', then it is completely unclear, at least from the point of view of the current rules, how an organisation consisting entirely of Party members can fail to be perceived, both by these members themselves and the general public, as a Party organisation.

The formula of comrade Lenin excludes the possibility of fictitious members of the Party and places the question of professional and other types of organisation which are not pursuing purely Social-Democratic goals on its proper basis, whilst not in the least excluding the possibility of exerting an influence on these organisations. Apart from that, the formula of Comrade Lenin gives Social-Democratic elements a stimulus to organisation.

Lenin's formula received 23 votes; 28 voted against it, including five Bundists, two *Rabochee Delo*-ists and one 'Struggle'-ist.<sup>20</sup> Martov's formula was adopted.

The debates and voting on §1 of the constitution, in which comrade Martov took a step towards opportunism in my view, showed that, with a disagreement among the *Iskra*-ites, the majority of the Congress would favour a line which to some degree approached opportunism. The grouping which finally formed during the elections to the central institutions could already be seen in outline. The departure of the Bund, which had been using imperative mandates,<sup>21</sup>

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19 Loose (German).

20 Pavlovich's suggestion that there was a representative of the 'Struggle' group at the Congress, despite the fact that the organisation was clearly refused an official invitation in its own right and, as he states below, despite the fact that it failed to win the allegiance of a single local RSDLP committee possessing the right to send delegates to Congress, is more than a little puzzling. It is possible that the 'Struggle'-ist in question is the *Iuzhnyi Rabochist* Vladimir Rozanov ('Popov'), and that Pavlovich is calling the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* delegates along with Alexandrova 'Struggle'-ists for polemical effect, owing to their efforts to secure Riazanov's invitation to the Congress in its opening stages. If this is the case, then Pavlovich should perhaps have acknowledged that the other " 'Struggle'-ist" (*Iuzhnyi Rabochii* supporter), with voting rights, supported Lenin's formula for paragraph one at this point. Alternatively, he could simply have been wrong and self-contradictory in referring to the presence of 'Struggle' supporters at the Congress.

21 The two resolutions submitted by Liber to the Second Congress of the RSDLP on the character of the Party's internal structure (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 76–7 and p. 127) had in fact been composed at the Fifth Congress of the Bund, which

and the delegates of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, who were offended by their organisation's dissolution, delivered us from much unpredictability, but to make up for it, two groupings of *Iskra*-ites, who fought each other for a definite composition of the centres, found themselves face to face with one another.

Well in advance of the Congress, during the Christmas of 1902, one of the comrades working in Russia (a member of the OC) asked the *Iskra* Editorial Board, through comrades Martov and Lenin, to get to work on the organisational rules. A few days before the Congress, it emerged that comrade Martov had in his possession a sketch of his own draft constitution.<sup>22</sup> Yet, having spent several weeks familiarising himself with comrade Lenin's draft prior to the Congress, he did not consider it necessary to publish it, and consequently the Lenin draft featured in the preliminary meetings of the arriving delegates as the only *Iskra*-ite draft. It was, as such, defended by comrade Martov and also, 'foaming at the mouth', as several delegates later put it, by comrade Trotsky.

This draft, broadly speaking, formed the basis of the present Party constitution. It underwent changes to §1 (in a Martovite spirit), the point about the Council (in the spirit of those Russian comrades who insisted on broadening the functions of the Council) and the point about the co-option of members to the CO<sup>23</sup> and the CC.<sup>24</sup> There were two leading centres in the initial version of the Lenin draft, the CO and the CC, each of which was to be autonomous in its own sphere, and the Council, which was to be made up of five people elected by Congress, was to be convened *in cases of conflict between them*. Thus, according to the initial version of Lenin's draft, the Council was only the highest arbitral institution. I and several other comrades who did not consider such an arrangement of the top institutions to be apposite, insisted on the broadening of the functions of the Council. I insisted that the Council should be able to meet not only in cases of conflict, but whenever important Party questions arose, cases where there was no conflict but in which it was necessary to take a decision which neither of the two centres could take responsibility for individually. This amendment was accepted by the author of the draft and was

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had taken place a few weeks earlier. The Bund delegates had indeed been mandated to withdraw from the RSDLP Congress by their own Congress if the second, supposedly more conciliatory resolution was not adopted (see Bund 1903, pp. 6–7 and pp. 25–7).

22 This draft is cited in full in Lenin's *One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back* (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 244–7).

23 This refers to the 'central organ' or the central RSDLP newspaper. The Second RSDLP Congress decided that this should be *Iskra*.

24 The Central Committee.



submitted to the constitution commission. Comrade Martov declared himself in solidarity with this idea of a Supreme Council at Congress and expressed himself thus: 'I move that we reject the proposal to strike out the words: "The Council is the highest institution" . . . For us, the Council is not only a reconciling institution.'<sup>25</sup>

Congress approved this formula. A disagreement arose regarding the choice of the fifth member, about how to appoint him: should he be elected at the Congress or should this right be granted to the four representatives nominated by the CO and the CC? It was decided to elect him at the Congress. Comrade Martov stood for granting this right to the four representatives of the CO and the CC. 42 against six voted in favour of the constitution as a whole, which several comrades, along with the Bundists, tried to portray as Arakcheev-esque,<sup>26</sup> and there was one abstention.

Thus you can see that the constitution was accepted by everybody with the exception of the Bundists at the Congress itself and without any principled disagreement (apart from §1) among the *Iskra*-ites. However, a less than promising atmosphere had been created prior to the elections. The reader of the minutes will search in vain through the debates for the fundamental cause of the split among the *Iskra*-ites. He will try to understand why, for example, the question of the little group, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, was debated so passionately, but he will not meet with success.<sup>27</sup> In order to clarify this issue, it is necessary to make sense of the incident with the Organising Committee at the beginning of the Congress and to turn our attention to the unofficial meetings of the *Iskra* organisation.

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25 See Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 268 [Pavlovich's footnote – Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 351].

26 Aleksei Andreevich Arakcheev (1769–1834) was a general and inspector of artillery under Paul I and Alexander I. He had a tyrannical and arbitrary reputation both in his personal life and in the carrying out of his official duties, and is particularly associated with the policy of creating 'military settlements', strictly controlled collectivised villages inhabited by reservists and their families. His name has entered the Russian language: *arakcheevshchina* is now used as a term to describe reactionary and oppressive military regimes.

27 The issue in this debate was whether *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* would be dissolved and asked to combine its forces with the new official RSDLP newspaper, *Iskra*, or whether it would be allowed to continue as a second RSDLP newspaper written in a more popular style. Congress decided upon the former alternative after a long and tense debate (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 409, p. 416).

You know that the Organising Committee did not amount to an entirely well-integrated organisation. A Bundist,<sup>28</sup> members of the *Iskra* organisation,<sup>29</sup> *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists<sup>30</sup> and one quite accidental individual took part in its work. Of course, the Bundist pursued his own policy, which was defined by the overall position of the Bund.

Everybody remembers the scandal raised by the Bund in its 'press' regarding – allegedly – the first meeting of the Organising Committee.<sup>31</sup> Its thunder was directed at *Iskra*'s 'machinations'. Even after it had entered the Organising Committee, the Bund continued its unpleasant polemic with *Iskra* and dismissed the committee as an *Iskra* intrigue. The *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists (having declared their solidarity with *Iskra* following lengthy negotiations)<sup>32</sup> followed their own special line. This line (independent of their stability in principled questions) consisted in the ambition of strengthening their own influence over the south, which, prior to the foundation of the Organising Committee, was not great. The goal of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* was to leave the Congress as the Editorial Board of a popular newspaper in Russia. This tendency was at odds with *Iskra*'s plans. I will not touch on other disagreements between the *Iskra*-ites and the *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists. It is only important for me to note here that *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* had its own plans which were separate from the plans of *Iskra*, as well as its more narrow parochial interests.

Only one of the original seven *Iskra* members of the Organising Committee was able to attend the Congress.<sup>33</sup> A second *Iskra* member of the Organising Committee who did show up belonged to the (jokingly) so-called '*Iskra*-ites

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28 Yekuziel Portnoi (1872–1941), (known as Abrahamson at the Second Congress of the RSDLP).

29 In the next paragraph but one, Pavlovich states that seven *Iskra* supporters were originally detailed to work on the Organising Committee, but that most of these were arrested: they were in fact arrested straight after the November 1902 meeting at Pskov, which finally launched the Organising Committee's work. Thereafter, Alexandrova, Krasikov (Pavlovich) and Rozalia Halberstadt represented *Iskra*, whilst the leading *Iskra*-ites, Krzhizhanovskii and Lengnik, also remained formal participants but did not appear to play a very active role in the committee's work.

30 Levin ('Egorov') and Rozanov ('Popov').

31 See Chapter 14 in the collection.

32 A statement to this effect appeared in *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* No. 10, which appeared in September 1902. For Lenin's response to this development, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 225–8.

33 This was Pavlovich, the author himself.

who were ashamed of being *Iskra*-ites'.<sup>34</sup> Apart from them, there was one Bundist, one *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ist (a second arrived a day late)<sup>35</sup> and one accidental member.<sup>36</sup> This accidentally-formed composition of the Organising Committee's delegation to the Congress graphically illustrates the way in which capricious tactics can flow from such an amalgamation of forces. This was demonstrated even before the Congress had started, at a meeting of the Organising Committee concerning the invitation of persons with consultative votes: as is well-known, the Organising Committee had the right to make such invitations *prior to* the opening of the Congress. To the surprise of all the members of the *Iskra* organisation (including the Editorial Board) and despite the most energetic protest of comrade Martov, one of the *Iskra* representatives on the Organising Committee, let us call him 'Z',<sup>37</sup> introduced the proposal of inviting a certain 'K' who was known to the organisation only for his 'defections', a *Rabochee Delo*-ist.<sup>38</sup> Desperate combat took place between the two *Iskra* representatives in which 'Z', who was driven by the necessity of inviting 'K', firstly on the grounds that he had written some criticism of *Iskra* views (later it turned out that this book did not exist), and secondly because 'Z' was in solidarity with all those opinions which 'K' had expressed in his disagreement with *Iskra*. This declaration surprised all the members of the *Iskra* organisation and made them indignant. The incident was only successfully resolved

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34 Alexandrova. According to one source, one other figure present at the Congress in a consultative (non-voting) capacity was Halberstadt, also an *Iskra* supporter and participant in the Organising Committee (Aksel'rod and Martov 1924, p. 80; Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 516).

35 Egorov was the latecomer.

36 The identity of this individual is not clear, but the editors of the Axelrod-Martov letters suggest that it was Alexander Mitrofanovich Stopani (1871–1932). If this is the case, then the 'chance element' evidently soon became a firm adherent of Leninism, judging by his speeches at the Second Congress (as 'Lange'). A more likely candidate would be Halberstadt, whom these editors also identify as a member of the Organising Committee. (Certain passages in Alexandrova's letter could be read as implying that Alexandrova co-opted her). Either way, it is clear that rather more members of the Organising Committee attended the Second RSDLP Congress than Pavlovich is willing to admit, possibly for security reasons.

37 The 'Z' in question is actually female – Alexandrova.

38 The notes to Lenin's *Collected Works* identify the surname of this individual as Chernyshev (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 548), but no information is given about him beyond the fact that the defection took place in April 1903. Though *Rabochee Delo* had ceased to appear by this point, its parent organisation, the Union Abroad, was invited to send delegates to the Second Congress of the RSDLP and for this reason, the idea of a defection to the '*Rabochee Delo*-ists' can be said to make sense.

on this occasion because one *Iskra*-ite managed, with great effort, to draw to his side the accidental member of the Organising Committee.<sup>39</sup>

The second incident unfolded once the sessions of the Congress had already started. The starting point of this incident was the celebrated 'quick session by the window' of the Organising Committee, which took place in the Congress hall itself during a five-minute interval. Things took place in the following way. As is well known, the 'Struggle' group was not invited to the Congress by the Organising Committee, nor did it receive a mandate from a single Russian organisation. The non-invitation of 'Struggle' was definitely driven by the Organising Committee, both through its commentary to the rules<sup>40</sup> and through its individual members (including 'Z') in the commission for the checking of mandates. The commission fully subscribed to the opinion of the Organising Committee (with the exception of the Bundist sitting on it who, naturally, stood in favour of invitation though he declared that he was entirely unacquainted with the group in question). Suddenly, the second *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ist (a member of the Organising Committee), who has only just arrived at the Congress, announces that the question of 'Struggle' is for him, allegedly, a *new* one and demands a five-minute break in order to discuss it with his comrades. Making use of the five-minute break, a session 'by the window' is convened consisting of all available members of the Organising Committee and the *new* question for *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* is at once and without further ado put to the vote. 'Who is in favour of invitation?' All but one representative of *Iskra*, who energetically protests against such a course of action, finding it absurd and illegal.<sup>41</sup> The other representative of *Iskra*, 'Z', who has only just stood up for non-invitation in the commission, recognises both the legality of the activity and the necessity of invitation.

The break ends; the session continues. All apart from Akimov (Plekhanov, Martov and others) speak energetically against the invitation of the 'Struggle' group. After the closing of the debate on the question of 'Struggle', a *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* delegate requests the floor for a declaration by the Organising

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39 Again, the author refers to his own actions.

40 The 'rules' in question were the procedure by which the representative character of the Congress was decided, and in particular the question of which local organisations of the RSDLP, and which of its literary circles, had the right to send delegates. These rules were drafted by the Organising Committee and ratified by all the most well-established local RSDLP organisations. They, and the commentary to them, can be found in Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 493–500.

41 This again refers to the author's own actions.

Committee with the aim of influencing the voting. The bureau confers.<sup>42</sup> The dinner break is announced. During this break, a session of the Organising Committee is convened (by whom and with what aim it is not known as the member who informed the others). 'Z' answers this question: 'I do not know – they request attendance – that is all'. After this, a stormy session takes place. Pointing out: the tactlessness of the Organising Committee's intervention in the course of debates; the cancelling of imperative mandates; the previous decision of the Organising Committee on this question; the statements given to the commission for the checking of mandates; the protest against the legality of the very meeting of the Organising Committee regarding such questions and the departure of one of the *Iskra* representatives from this meeting – all this had no effect. At the third sitting of the Congress, a *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ist proposes, in the name of the Organising Committee, to invite Riazanov (though not the 'Struggle' group) with consultative voting rights under the pretext of concern for the fate of the future CC.

You will see in the minutes of the Congress what a depressing impression this meddling, this imposition of Riazanov produced. Comrades Plekhanov, Lenin and especially Martov, as well as others in agreement with them, spoke against the way in which the Organising Committee had acted and 42 votes were cast against the invitation of 'Struggle'. This incident created an impossible atmosphere within the Organising Committee, it undermined trust in 'Z' among many participants in the Congress, especially among members of the *Iskra* organisation, and it graphically illustrated the kinds of *zigzags and surprises an institution can produce* when scheming *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists and Bundists, always ready to trip somebody up, predominate along with shaky, inconsistent elements.

The *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists, having understood that they had overdone things, hurried to blot out this impression through a discussion with the Editorial Board of *Iskra* whilst 'Z', without any explanation and in a private conversation with Martov, announced his departure from the *Iskra* organisation.

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42 The Bureau, or Presidium, was in charge of chairing the debates and of implementing the rules governing the procedure of the Congress itself. The key question it had to decide in this incident was whether the Organising Committee, which had not granted itself representation rights at the Congress organised by itself, could make an official statement to the Congress. This slightly surreal dilemma was resolved with the observation that Congress could vote to do as it liked, on the grounds that it was the sovereign power within the RSDLP. The result was that a resolution was passed, stating that the Organising Committee could not intervene in the debates as a group (though several of its members had the right to speak or vote as representatives of other organisations) and, expressing thanks for its efforts in bringing about the Congress, the resolution declared it to be dissolved.

Private meetings of the *Iskra* organisation on this matter revealed complete mistrust towards the departing 'Z' on the part of many members; even among the 'softest', doubts arose regarding political trust towards 'Z'. The organisation resolved to demand an explanation from 'Z'. This explanation was given, but the majority of members remained dissatisfied with him. The important question of the composition of the central apparatus was raised in close connection with this incident. None of the *Iskra*-ites mentioned even once the idea of appointing the Organising Committee as the Central Committee, but great disagreement was revealed in the evaluation of the personalities who had, in one way or another, distinguished themselves either during these incidents or in the debates on programmatic and constitutional questions. However, the disagreements were revealed not so much in the evaluation of separate personalities *so much as in the combination of them in the CC*. It was necessary, in our opinion, to pay attention to the fact that, with the dissolution of an *Iskra* organisation which had carried the difficult work of unifying the Party on its shoulders, and with the transformation of the *Iskra* newspaper into a Party press organ, the only guarantee of continuity in the work of the future centre with that of the *Iskra* organisation – the only guarantee of its principled and practical stability – could be a definite composition of the CC.

Thus we insisted on preserving continuity between the CC and the Russian *Iskra* organisation, putting forward tested and experienced comrades as candidates, though not in the least opposing the introduction into the CC of all the most active revolutionaries, regardless of their shade of opinion. The history of the Organising Committee shows that this was the tactic of the *Iskra*-ites. There is not one fact which shows them barring the door of the Organising Committee to capable revolutionaries wishing to work.<sup>43</sup> All those familiar with the process of co-option employed by the Organising Committee, which was dominated by *Iskra*-ites, are obliged to agree with this statement. And in my opinion, the greatest mistake of comrade Martov consisted in his considering it possible to ignore this continuity and to insist on constructing the basis of the CC from unstable elements who belonged, according to one or another political estimate, to people who were always being referred to as 'the *Iskra* organisation' but who did not forget their own special interests and who were always ready to change front.

The fact that the majority of *Iskra* organisation members understood matters in precisely this manner was demonstrated by the last decisive meeting of the organisation, which was composed of 16 people (including every member

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43 This is something of a half-truth, given the efforts of *Iskra* to limit the Bund's influence in the Organising Committee.

of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group). Given the ban on imperative mandates, the decisions and votes of this organisation did not have a *binding, legal character*, but everybody understood the significance of these votes (which were recorded by the chairman). The main issue was that of continuity. It is important to note that this decisive meeting took place at the time of the discussion of the constitution, at a time when the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* had still not left the Congress (it was immediately after the debate on §1). From the start, the *Iskra*-ites attempted to come to an agreement regarding the elections of an initial trio, in accordance with the initial plan outlined in the commentary to the *Tagesordnung*<sup>44</sup> that was composed by comrade Lenin and to which Comrade Martov had made additions. This maintained that: 'Congress elects three people to the Editorial Board and three to the CC. These six individuals co-opt the necessary number of members to the CC and the CO by a 2/3 majority of votes; thereafter co-options take place separately'.

Comrade Martov insisted on the election of a trio in which unstable elements predominated, whereas we insisted on two consistent *Iskra*-ites (out of three), *Iskra*-ites who had been working for us since the foundation of *Iskra* and who had until recently been members of the Organising Committee.<sup>45</sup> All efforts to agree on the trio failed. The idea of a commission<sup>46</sup> was rejected by Martov. Then, comrade Lenin suggested agreeing on a compromise list of five individuals: three consistent *Iskra*-ites, two of which were members of the Organising Committee whilst the third, who had occupied a very important position in the Organising Committee, was a long-time member of the *Iskra* organisation; one leader of the 'minority' (he was not in the minority but the majority at the time we are now describing) and one *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ist, who was also a member of the Organising Committee.<sup>47</sup> This list united the majority of members of the *Iskra* organisation and gave hope of a successful end to the disagreement. Eleven votes were cast in favour of it, four (predominantly émigré figures, individuals who had scarcely participated in any organisational

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44 Agenda (German).

45 Krzhizhanovskii and Lengnik.

46 The commission should, in our opinion, have been made up of three or five authoritative comrades and should have conducted a painstaking interrogation of individuals nominated for the CC. It should have composed a list of individuals capable of working in one or another combination and then presented the results to the Congress. [Pavlovich's note].

47 This list must have been: Krzhizhanovskii, Lengnik and Noskov ('Glebov'); Trotsky (from the 'minority') and either Levin or Rozanov from *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*.



activity) abstained, whilst one vote was *against* the list. This was the vote of comrade Martov.

This one vote was enough to ensure that agreement between the majority of members of the *Iskra* organisation and the minority was not concluded. It was enough to compel us to take the risk of appearing at the elections without a definitive all-*Iskra* list<sup>48</sup> and of exposing the decision to all manner of accidental factors, by allowing the Bund, *Rabochee Delo* and other less-than-promising elements to participate in it. The debates and voting on the first § of the constitution showed that, with the division of the *Iskra*-ites, a question could be decided by unstable or patently hostile elements. So, we ended up in the following situation: comrade Martov broke his internal link with the *Iskra* organisation and set off down the road of 'gambling with the vote'. Being in a minority in the *Iskra* organisation, he nonetheless dictated conditions to it. On Martov's side were: Axelrod, Zasulich, Deutsch, Trotsky and Fomin<sup>49</sup> (all apart from Martov are people who have not been involved in organised activity). On the side of the majority were: Plekhanov, Lenin, Sablina<sup>50</sup> and six delegates<sup>51</sup> from Russian committees who had come to Congress directly from their work and who were highly conversant not only with the political physiognomy of all the delegates at the Congress, but also with the committees and organisations which had sent them. The same can be said of the secretary of the Editorial Board, Sablina, who for three years had carried out a vast amount of work organising contacts throughout the whole of Russia. Thus on one side there was a group of writers (though for the most part they were greatly respected) and on the other, two conspicuous leaders of the RSDLP and a group of underground Party workers, long-term members of the *Iskra* organisation.

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48 A list was circulated among the delegates to the Congress consisting of the favourite individuals of the minority: two *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists, 'Z', the leader of the minority, and one member who had been rejected by the overwhelming majority of *Iskra*-ites. Comrade Martov still found this list 'shameful' at the time and claimed that this list was a fake at the Congress of the League. In fact, comrade Deutsch appears to be the source of the affair around this list. He gave it to one of the delegates of the majority, comrade Gusev. Let Deutsch and Martov settle between themselves the question of why it turned out to be false. In this list were: Stein (Alexandrova), Egorov, Popov, Trotsky and Fomin. [Pavlovich's footnote].

49 Krokmal.

50 Krupskaya.

51 These six were: Hertz, Osipov, Dedov, Sorokin, Glebov and Pavlovich. [Pavlovich's footnote. Real names: Dmitri Il'ich Ulianov (1874–1943), Rozalia Samoilovna Zemliachka (1876–1947), Lydia Mikhailovna Knipovich (1856–1920), Nikolai Bauman, Vladimir Noskov and Pavel Krasikov].

The following slogan was issued by Martov: wage a struggle over the composition of the centres in the Congress. This made it 90 percent likely that a zig-zagging cabinet would result. That is why, knowing comrade Martov's character, the instability of his political line (his 'eternal quest for balance'), his inability to distinguish the personal from the political, his susceptibility to different influences – something which has nothing in common with true policy – and seeing how the opposition could animate unstable elements at the Congress (see the speech of Akimov on §1 and of the Bundists),<sup>52</sup> we saw real danger in comrade Martov's turnaround, which foreshadowed conflicts between the *Iskra*-ites themselves. Specifically, the danger consisted in all the scheming elements taking advantage of comrade Martov's instability and nominating him as their leader. We clearly discerned several little strings attached to Martov's back, around which all who had up to then constituted a harmless opposition ('Struggle'-ists) or who had modestly and silently sat on the benches at the Congress without feeling the desire to open fire on the *Iskra*-ites, in so far as the latter had up to that point been marching together, had united in order to pull. Knowing what had happened at the *Iskra* meetings, I think it would have been clear that the seemingly petty-minded struggle at the Congress over certain points in the constitution, for example over co-option, was a struggle between two groups of *Iskra*-ites.

The view that Lenin, and the comrades in solidarity with him, launched an attack on the 'inconsistent' with this paragraph is completely untrue. *It was quite the contrary*: the odds were that the 'Martovites' would present their list to the Congress, thus bringing about a most unexpected development (neither the Bund nor *Rabochee Delo* had left yet). It was not a case of 'giving somebody the boot' but of preserving some guarantee of stability and continuity given the co-option of new members to the CC, a concern which was rooted in the assumption that the initial three or five would mainly be 'Martovites'. If things were not so, then it remains only to assume that, putting forward the point about unanimous co-option, we were concerned about our opponents, as unanimity is not only unnecessary, it is even a hindrance for the dominant Party in any institution. When the point about unanimity passed with a weak majority, Martov tried to reduce it to nought and was successful in this, securing the passage of his amendments, but at the price of an entanglement in the

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52 Akimov's speech proposed a further 'watering-down' of the obligations of a Party member, and he proposed the following formula: 'A member of the RSDLP is one who accepts the *basic propositions* of the Party programme and renders personal assistance to the Party under the direction of one of its organisations' (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 332, translator's italics).

question of co-optation of the Supreme Council,<sup>53</sup> which he had tried to present as an important factor that would influence the personal composition of the Party institutions. The current constitution was obtained as a result of debates and votes (in which the Bund and the *Rabochee Delo*-ists more than once supported Martov) and it was adopted as a whole, as has already been said, by a 42-vote majority. Whatever its inadequacies, in future work it will be necessary to reckon with it as a fact.

You can see that the role of the Editorial Board in this constitution is not only that of a literary collective – it is much more important than this. The Editorial Board sends two people to the Party Council and it sends three if the fifth member belongs to the Editorial Board. The Council has great powers and it has influence on the personal composition of the centres. The Editorial Board has been converted from a literary family-circle into an important factor of political leadership in the work of the Party and therefore the question has risen before us: do those family-patriarchal relations, which belonged to the old Editorial Board composed of six people, meet the requirement of this new role? An answer to this question can be obtained in two ways: either from the members of the board themselves or through an objective evaluation of them viewed as separate individuals, along with an evaluation of their activity and the forms of this activity. Two editors, Plekhanov and Lenin answered the question: no, we are not satisfied and wish for an election of the Editorial Board by Congress, and this answer coincided with the opinion of the majority of the *Iskra*-ites, which was mentally arrived at in the second fashion. I say ‘mentally’ because nobody intended to present such an evaluation at the sessions of the Congress itself. A huge blunder on the part of Martov’s supporters was to stir up the issue of ratifying the old Editorial Board, as opposed to its election (which is described in the commentary to the *Tagesordnung*, a document known to all the editors well in advance of the Congress owing to the fact that comrade Lenin announced long before the Congress that he would insist on an election if the Congress was pro-*Iskra*).<sup>54</sup> This blunder undoubtedly had

53 See *Minutes*, p. 278. [Pavlovich’s footnote – Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 362–3].

54 At the preliminary meetings prior to Congress, as I have already said, the *Tagesordnung* was discussed in the commentary to which it was said: Congress elects three to the CC and three to the CO. No-one doubted who would be elected to the editorial trio. Comrade Martov and his allies put forward the question of ratifying the old Editorial Board only at the Congress, after the split in the *Iskra* organisation and after the exit of the Bund and *Rabochee Delo*, once they had lost their majority. The assertion of the ‘Siberian Delegation’ that ‘the ratification of the Editorial Board is implied of its own accord’ – as is the case with many of its assertions – completely contradicts reality and is based not on facts, but

the goal of placing the entire matter of the Editorial Board on the terrain of 'offence' (all those speaking in favour of ratification speculated on this matter; at that point a principled disagreement had still not been invented).

The deputies supporting an election were really put in a ticklish situation. Not wishing to ratify the old Editorial Board, it seemed as if they were bound to cause offence to those excluded from the Editorial Board as a result of the elections. Thus both the non-ratification and the election were unavoidably bound to acquire the same sharp character, thanks to a philistine presentation of the matter at hand.<sup>55</sup> The majority, who ascribed just as little value to these philistine arguments as to the tears that were being shed by yesterday's 'Struggle'-ists and *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists (even a *Rabochee Delo*-ist spoke in favour of ratifying the old Editorial Board),<sup>56</sup> and who saw a very clear political calculation behind these crocodile tears, decided the matter in accordance with its essential nature. It was perfectly well known to all delegates that the writers who directed the editorial work were Martov, Lenin and Plekhanov. All issues of *Iskra* were put together either by Lenin or by Martov. The participation of other people in this work was next to zero. The number of articles published in *Iskra* after 45 issues tallies (approximately) as follows: Plekhanov – 24, Lenin – 32, Martov – 39, Starover – 8, Zasulich – 6 and Pavel Axelrod – 4 – after three years of *Iskra*'s existence. (Not one of the unelected editors' 18 articles was, in any sense, a leading article). The board did not once meet in full during three years. There was a great rigmarole involved in resolving questions which had provoked especially strong disagreement. Votes could be divided three against three and a sufficiently hopeless situation was thus created. As is well known, the present writer was unanimously elected to the Editorial Board as a seventh member just before the Congress in case it was necessary to resolve any controversial matter within the board at the time of the Congress itself.

The type of surprises which could occur in the political leadership of the Party, surprises dependent upon which elements of the board accidentally

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on inventions dragged up *ad hoc* for agitational purposes. The fairy tale about yesterday's 'Economists', on whom Plekhanov and Lenin allegedly leaned for support, can be added to the sum of these arguments [Pavlovich's footnote].

55 As a result of the question being posed in this way, the minority broke off all personal relations with their very closest comrades, with whom they had worked together for many years. Now it is clearly visible that the split takes priority over 'principles', as principled people are not offended if their opponents are elected [Pavlovich's footnote].

56 This was actually Lydia Makhnovets ('Broukera'), a representative of the Petersburg Workers' Organisation, the northern capital's 'Economist' group most closely associated with *Rabochaia Mysl'*. She remained at the Congress until the end unlike her allies from the Union Abroad.

predominated during one or another important moment in the life of the Party – this was indicated by the ‘zig-zags’ known to all long-serving members of the *Iskra* organisation in the direction of terror following Lekert’s shooting attempt,<sup>57</sup> zig-zags which were explained as the product of the expansive natures of Martov and Zasulich, who at that point had a majority over Lenin. Only the desperate resistance of Plekhanov, who sent a protesting letter to the Editorial Board, saved our Party from one of those ‘historical’ (or should that be ‘hysterical?’) turns.<sup>58</sup> The consequences of all this are to be found in No. 21 of *Iskra*.<sup>59</sup> For all the admirable literary talent of comrade Martov, we, the majority of the members of the *Iskra* organisation, do not consider him to be capable of independent political leadership. In our opinion, his talents can be productively employed by the Party only in combination with strict political minds such as those of Plekhanov and Lenin. Martov’s behaviour at the Congress only strengthened this conviction. Nobody thought to predetermine the question of whom this troika would co-opt. We suggested that it was the business of this capable trio itself to co-opt whomever it found to be necessary and convenient, and we gave neither comrade Lenin nor comrade Plekhanov the least occasion to think that co-option would not take place. We knew that comrade Axelrod had several times already declined a place on the Editorial Board owing to illness and we knew that there were new candidates. Congress could not, and did not wish to, sort out this question.

Thus, on the question of the election of the Editorial Board, the majority was guided by: 1) the wishes of (two of) the editors themselves; 2) the declaration of the Editorial Board on the question of ratifying *Iskra* as the Party organ; 3) its own evaluation of individuals over the course of more than a

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57 Hirsch Lekert (1880–1902) was a shoemaker and Bundist who attempted to assassinate the governor of Vilno, Victor von Wahl (1840–1915) in May 1902. This unsuccessful attempt was made in response to the governor ordering the public flogging of workers who had participated in that year’s May Day demonstration. Lekert was executed shortly afterwards and was subsequently venerated as a hero in the Bund organisation, not least owing to a courageous speech he made at his trial.

58 This is a punning reference to the article, ‘A Historic Turn’, in *Listok Rabochego Dela* No. 6 (see Chapter 7), which in various ways expressed a sharp and entirely unexpected break with *Rabochee Delo*’s previous emphasis on gradual, ‘Economist’ tactics. It too defended assassinations as a political tactic.

59 It is not entirely clear which article Pavlovich is referring to here, but it could well be the draft programme of *Iskra* and *Zaria* which serves as the leading article in this issue of *Iskra*, which was prepared mainly by Plekhanov and Lenin and which did not speak in favour of terror. With minor changes, this draft was approved by the Second Congress of the RSDLP and can be found in Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 6–9.

month at the Congress itself (the minutes of the Congress give firm criteria in this connection);<sup>60</sup> 4) evaluation of their previous activity not only as writers, but as revolutionaries who directed organisational work (of all the members of the Editorial Board, only Lenin and Martov did this). Starting from all of this, Congress was obliged to put the ideological leaders of the Party in a situation in which each of the editors appeared in the Editorial Board as an independent aspect of the one hypostasis, if one can put it that way. To our surprise, comrade Martov, before the elections and after them, declared that there were four of him<sup>61</sup> and that the election of the Editorial Board was mistrust. And this came after the Editorial Board became – with his assistance – *not only a literary board* but a highly important Party *institution*. Comrade Martov, feeling that his position, which was also adopted by the supporters of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, was based on a sense of grievance and that it was weak, sought to give it a political motive. He read the following ultimatum to Congress: given that the current rules grant the Editorial Board the right to influence the Council (as is already known, comrade Martov took great trouble to broaden the rights of the Council) and given that the Council can influence the CC and given that only I, Martov, plus those members *who were not elected* – only we alone – can guarantee the beneficial character of this influence, as a group of four against Lenin and Plekhanov, Congress should, through this group of four, outvote Lenin and Plekhanov in the board; otherwise I, Martov, do not wish to enter it.

Congress rejected this presentation of the question by 25 votes to two with 17 abstentions, and with this recognised the impossibility of accepting such ultimatums, which were not presented prior to war, but after the opening of hostilities between the two sections of the *Iskra*-ites over the composition of the centres, after the struggle had been introduced into the Congress and when only the Congress could have resolved it. In the opinion of comrade Martov, Congress, not having any other information at its disposal, should have taken him at his word when he said that *the influence of one person would be*

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60 Evidently, Pavlovich is not referring to the minutes in their published form, which first appeared only several months after the Congress, but to the fact that the minutes of earlier sessions were read out, corrected and approved during the Congress itself. Several sessions at the end of the Congress were solely devoted to this activity.

61 Here, Pavlovich alludes in a whimsical way to the fact that Martov refused to serve on the new Editorial Board of *Iskra*, the one elected at Congress, unless it was a board of six: Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov, Potresov, Zasulich and Axelrod. At the Second Congress, the Leninist majority put forward a slate of three editors: Lenin, Plekhanov and Martov, which was of course, elected. However, Martov refused to accept this editorial post which he had been awarded by his opponents – his own supporters abstained in the vote – demanding instead the co-option of his three allies, a demand that was ultimately met with Lenin's resignation from the board a little over two months after the Congress ended.

*better than the influence of another.* Congress preferred to resolve this question on the basis of what it knew. It chose comrades Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov as responsible editors. Comrade Martov, as we all know, once again refused to enter an Editorial Board in which he would be outvoted, supposedly, by Plekhanov and Lenin. This declaration convinced few, only those whose purpose it served. To say that comrades Starover, Zasulich and Axelrod, who had not even once given objective proof of any special tendency that could be advantageously distinguished from that of Plekhanov and Lenin during the sessions and debates of the Congress – sessions and debates which had covered all possible questions of Party life and which had lasted for more than a month – should enter the Editorial Board, come what may, *after* their non-election; to say this to a collection of people who were personally familiar with the question of *who* directed the organisational work (at present, we are not speaking about literary work), of *who* was occupied with the selection and allocation of Party forces; to say this whilst raising suspicions against two Party leaders, Plekhanov and Lenin; to say this whilst leaning on the supportive clamour of yesterday's 'Struggle'-ists, 'Economists', *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ists and offended candidates to the central bodies – all this meant that, having lost the internal battle (initiated by he, Martov, himself), he gave a war cry to the enemy and appealed for help to a coalition of their ill-assorted opponents.

During the elections to the CC, a very 'compact' opposition was formed. They all (including *Rabochee Delo*)<sup>62</sup> abstained from voting and the editors who were not elected declared their solidarity with this opposition in writing. Nonetheless, three reliable members were elected to the CC by the united *Iskra*-ites (all three were long-serving members of the *Iskra* organisation) and two of them had been members of the Organising Committee, the other being one of its agents who had carried out a highly important function in the Party.<sup>63</sup> The opposition made every effort to discredit these elections. A *Iuzhnyi Raboch*-ist (who had announced his own candidature) simply tried to undermine the Congress and to declare the elections illegal (even though the decision had been passed by a majority of votes).<sup>64</sup> The majority of Russian delegates, having been taught this lesson in intra-Party 'political' struggle, were surprised,

62 This remark is strange as, by this stage of the Congress, the two representatives of the Union Abroad, Vladimir Akimov and Alexander Martynov, had already left. Only one delegate of a definite 'Economist' persuasion, Lydia Makhnovets, representing the St. Petersburg Workers' Organisation and the *Rabochaia Mysl'* trend, remained at the Congress until the end and was thus in a position to abstain from the elections to the Central Committee.

63 Krzhizhanovskii, Lengnik and Noskov. Noskov was the one who was not formally a member of the Organising Committee.

64 This would be Rozanov ('Popov'), who in the *Minutes* actually refers to his candidature as a 'rumour'.



disappointed and full of indignation. Indeed, if comrades Zasulich, Axelrod and Starover had ever had serious disagreements with comrades Lenin and Plekhanov, disagreements which they did not consider it necessary to either speak or write about for some reason or another, then it seems to us that any basic sense of Party tact should not have permitted them to adopt the pose of saviours of the Party from the harmful influence of Plekhanov and Lenin so suddenly after the election. The resultant impression was to the highest degree unseemly and the absurdity of the position of Martov and co. was striking. If there was principled disagreement, then it would be comical to pretend that latent principles had not received the sanction of the Congress. If there were no such disagreements, then the claim on an editorial position is strange. It seems to us that only a Riazanov could make a scandal out of this.<sup>65</sup> The thought had occurred to nobody that a strike of writers would be declared straight after the Congress and without any explanation of a principled character, in other words a literary boycott of the central Party newspaper, despite the invitation of the Editorial Board to express their principled disagreement; or that the very broadest agitation against the central institutions of the Party would be conducted under the banner of a struggle for the independence of the supposedly downtrodden CC; or that writers, at the head of 'elements' dissatisfied with the elections to the centre would try, using an émigré circle-mentality<sup>66</sup> to overturn decisions of the Congress, exploiting the unreinforced position of the CC and, truth be told, would even try to carry out a palace coup *prior* to this reinforcement.

Whoever knows Russian conditions also knows to what degree genuine revolutionary work is hampered when discord among the committees occurs, and knows how easy it is for a few energetic demagogues to produce unrest by exploiting comrades' lack of access to information, misrepresenting, distorting and exaggerating facts, whipping up the opposition of elements with

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65 David Borisovich Goldendach (1870–1938), better known by the pseudonym Riazanov, was a noted Soviet academic and founder of the Marx-Engels institute, who was executed after a perfunctory trial during the 1937–8 terror. Having initially shown sympathy towards *Iskra*, he broke with it in March 1901 in response to Lenin's article, 'Where to Begin?', which criticised the editorial, 'A Historic Turn', in *Listok Rabochego Dela* No. 6. After a brief flirtation with the Union Abroad, Riazanov helped form the three-member 'Struggle' group which ostensibly sought to reunite the Social-Democratic emigration. The project lacked credibility owing to Riazanov's own lengthy polemical forays against both *Rabochee Delo* and *Iskra*, leading to accusations from Plekhanov that he was merely manoeuvring in search of an editorial post on any of the several émigré Social-Democratic publications, regardless of their political differences. In this way, Riazanov's name came to symbolise an unprincipled place-seeking mentality in the minds of many *Iskra* supporters, possibly due to a somewhat vindictive attitude on the part of Plekhanov towards a perceived rival.

66 The most significant display of this came at the Congress of the 'League'.

little consciousness to the earlier harmonious work of the *Iskra*-ites, which is now hidden from view. No-one is suggesting that it is possible to tear up the Party, to deprive Congresses of all their moral prestige (see the note in Martov's pamphlet *Once More in the Minority*),<sup>67</sup> to invent inessential disagreements, to employ the tactic of provoking the central institutions with the aim of using every rebuff given by these institutions to anarchistic individualism for agitational purposes, merely because certain writers will not be editors and members of the Council, but only contributors. What sort of majority Martov feared in a trio with Plekhanov and Lenin is incomprehensible, for nobody has previously slighted Plekhanov as the leader of the 'Martovites' does at present (in order to show that Martov is right), by calling him a pawn in the hands of Lenin (see Trotsky's report to the Siberian Union).<sup>68</sup>

The experience of the Editorial Board does not in the least prove this. Nor did the personality of Plekhanov ever permit the board to consider it thus; on the contrary, Martov was with Lenin against Plekhanov and Plekhanov was with Martov against Lenin on very many important questions. Why did it not suit Martov to stand up for his shade in a manner different from that of arming himself with a 'bureaucratic' majority of votes, which the unelected members of the Editorial Board who were saved by him later gave him, whilst failing to arm himself with the force of conviction and the full possibility, given his position on the Editorial Board, of appealing to the public opinion of the Party and of preparing his 'turnaround' (instigating it in people's minds as a preliminary step) in advance of the Third Congress, arming himself with material garnered during his editorial experience, which would have allowed him to provide a wealth of evidence regarding the perniciousness of Plekhanov and Lenin? Here, once again, the political (hysterical) inconsistency of Martov – the wish

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67 This article exists as part of the Houghton Collection of Russian Revolutionary Literature, but only in handwritten form and the manuscript is very faded. Consequently, it has not been possible to decipher its contents. Apparently, it served as the basis for the article, 'Our Congress', in *Iskra* No. 53, the contents of which are summarised in Chapter 18, footnote 13.

68 How absurd this *fundamental* argument of comrade Martov was, and how much it was made up *ad hoc*, is shown by the co-option by comrade Plekhanov of comrades Starover, Zasulich and Axelrod in an attempt to avoid a split, despite comrade Lenin's opinion on this matter, after which the 'dialectical' Siberian delegate (whom dialectics do not permit to stay in one place – 'everything flows', including his own writing, which he terms a 'human document') reworked his report with the help of a secret unknown to Joseph Gutenberg, so that the main thesis of his 'document': '*Plekhanov is a toy in the hands of Lenin*', which was at first resung in various keys, vanished in the literal sense of the word from the republished report. Further, he came close to the 'antithesis' and paid his respects to comrade Plekhanov. These dialectics are very convenient! [Pavlovich's footnote].

to defend freedom of ideas, armed with paragraphs and so-called bureaucratic rules is demonstrated. There has always been, and always will be, an opposition minority in any Party. But it was absurd for Martov to come to the defence of the opposition from a fanatical oppressor when Martov himself did not share the principles of this opposition and, evidently, has still not fully assimilated them. It is still more absurd to try to strengthen everything which can strengthen the opposition in the organisational sense and, consequently, to organise this opposition at the expense of the organisation of the Party. This is still more absurd because Martov did not rely on any kind of experience, to use his words (see the note in the pamphlet *Once More in the Minority*)<sup>69</sup> – he ‘drew on a blank slate’. ‘Drawing’ is allowed, but this drawing has a painful effect on those who are occupied with work which does not take place at a tea table.

We have gained experience. What was that work which the *Iskra* organisation carried out over the course of three years? And does the Organising Committee really not represent some definite type of experience? Did not the members of the Organising Committee themselves know that the separate interests, which were revealed by several members, were a brake on the harmonious work of the temporary centre which bore the name Organising Committee? Was not the *debut* of the Organising Committee at the Congress, where for accidental reasons it appeared in a form as if deliberately selected to illustrate the politics of capriciousness, was this not a highly instructive experiment? Was not the Congress itself, where over the course of one-and-a-half months every delegate, every consultative voice was able to demand the attention of comrades and reveal his or her line – was this not great experience? It was. This experience warned us against navigating without a rudder and without a sail, against moving in the direction of the prevailing wind and current. We proposed that, in order to reach our projected goals, which are all the more approaching ideal goals, we need to hold the wheel firmly and to act in accordance with a compass. Only then will we not be frightened by side winds; only then will we manage to use them and to ensure that they fill our sail, drawing us ever closer to our desired goal. In our opinion, experience shows that fortitude, self-possession and strong organisation of the centres is needed. The Party is not a horse – as one of the delegates at the Congress wittily observed – one cannot steer it now in one direction, now in another according to the whim of one or another rider who, ‘drawing on a blank slate’, is guided by yet to be invented and yet to be substantiated principles that are not known to anybody, without bringing harm to the whole of the Party’s activity.

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69 See footnote 67 of this chapter.

## Resolution of the Second RSDLP Congress 'Minority'

*The following document, a resolution drafted and adopted at a meeting of Martov's supporters during September 1903, demonstrates how soon this group-  
ing decided upon a campaign to overturn the results of the elections to the RSDLP's  
leading bodies which took place at the Party's Second Congress. The document  
was written at a time when Lenin and Plekhanov still appeared interested in nego-  
tiating with them and in appeasing them using the Party-constitutional means  
of co-opting several of their number onto the Editorial Board and the Central  
Committee.<sup>1</sup> In stark contrast to these conciliatory efforts, the resolution reveals  
the intention of carrying the dispute with the elected Party leadership into Russia,  
with the defeated faction planning on seeking the support of the local committees  
for its point of view.*

*The document is of additional interest as it suggests that the 'Martovites' were  
eager to test their own modification to the first paragraph of the Party constitu-  
tion at the earliest possible opportunity. This can be said for the following reasons.  
The resolution indicates the creation of an independent literary group within the  
Party as one of its goals and this group was apparently to function as the head  
of a factional apparatus directly and militantly opposed to the Party leadership  
and unwilling to obey its instructions, or those of any other part of the official  
Party apparatus such as the local committees. The group's ultimate aim was to  
prepare its own basis of support within the Party in advance of a Third RSDLP  
Congress, where it would presumably fight for control of the Party apparatus with  
the followers of Lenin. Prior to this event, it did not intend to recognise various  
responsibilities in relation to the central institutions of the Party, calling instead  
for a 'boycott' of the Party's own official newspaper, Iskra, by refusing to distribute  
it or to submit anything but protesting articles and letters to it.*

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 347. See also Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 437, where Plekhanov gives the strong impression of support for the re-running of the elections after Martov refused to serve on the Editorial Board; or the notably conciliatory, even apologetic tone of Lenin's letter to Potresov dated 13 September 1903 N.S., in which Lenin appears desperate to resolve the disagreement (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 164–6) and Krupskaya 1930, p. 75.

*Despite this unusually assertive attitude, it could be said that, provided that the members of such a body 'offered regular assistance under the direction of (an official) Party organisation' such as a local committee, its behaviour would not actually be unconstitutional. Indeed, its authors seem to have paid careful attention to the letter of the Party constitution at certain points in the resolution. Thus it seeks the permission of the Central Committee for the literary centre to exist and, despite calling for a 'boycott' of Iskra, insists that the group's members forward all local reports to the paper, as the Party constitution in fact required.<sup>2</sup> In a similar fashion, the resolution does not call for a refusal to obey the decisions of the Central Committee, which would also be clearly unconstitutional, despite the fact that this institution was at this stage made up entirely of 'Leninists'.*

*Given this apparent observance of 'legality', the disruptive potential of the intended campaign seems to illustrate better than anything the point behind Lenin's phrasing of the first paragraph of the Party constitution. Had his formula been approved, the existence of a grouping in the Party which had resolved to contribute nothing to the Party's official work, work such as transporting and distributing the Party's official literature, raising funds for the official apparatus, recruiting new members to the Party and so forth, whilst at the same time claiming continued membership of the Party with the sole aim of undermining its official leadership and seizing power from this leadership at the earliest possible opportunity – this would have clearly been impossible. This was because, in Lenin's formula, every member of the RSDLP had to belong to an official Party organisation, and only Congress or the Central Committee could decide which organisations came into this category.*

*With Lenin's formula in place, the Central Committee could have therefore refused to recognise the 'independent literary group' as a Party organisation. This step would not in itself have implied the expulsion of the Martovites, in so far as all of them belonged to the official RSDLP organisation as well as their faction: most of them were in fact members of the League Abroad. However, following such a decision they would have been obliged to direct their energies rather more towards their 'personal participation' in these official organisations, thus reducing, if not entirely preventing, factional activity. Rather than spending most of their time inciting local bodies against the Party leadership at the price of mere 'regular assistance', they would actually have had to join these bodies and help carry out their decisions and participate fully in local work, whilst at the same*

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2 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 12: '11. Every Party organisation is obliged to supply both to the Central Committee and to the Editorial Board of the Central Organ all information regarding every aspect of its activity and all its members' (paragraph 11 of the RSDLP organisational rules).

*time carrying out instructions passed down to the local organisations from the Central Committee.*

*Given that Martov's definition of a Party member was in force, the Central Committee could still refuse to recognise the Martovite 'literary centre', and all things being equal, one would have expected this to be the most likely outcome.<sup>3</sup> Yet this in itself would probably only have led to the Martovites being refused access to official Party resources, such as printing presses, when pursuing their factional campaign. They could not – at least according to their own interpretation of the first paragraph of the rules – have been prevented from publishing material using non-Party resources. Even though their 'literary group' would have been officially excluded from the RSDLP, its individual members and supporters would have remained in the Party, as members of various local organisations, and without a serious political campaign to expel each one of these members individually on the part of the Central Committee, there would have been very little to prevent them from producing and distributing 'unofficial' literature urging resistance to the leadership, using non-Party owned presses. Thus it seems that the decision to request the recognition of the 'literary group' from the Central Committee – part seven of the resolution – was motivated not only by a desire to obtain maximum legitimacy for the group; it also involved a fairly audacious attempt to get the RSDLP leadership to allocate funds and resources to the discontented minority.*

*As for the arguments put forward as the basis of this factional activity, there is a tendency to object to the existence of a Party constitution and constitutionally appointed Party authorities of any description, especially in the section written by Trotsky. Criticising a perceived 'legally enforced power' of the Editorial Board over the Central Committee and, through the latter, the Party as a whole, Trotsky appears to promote the wielding of 'ideological influence' of various types as a role more fitting for a Party newspaper. In a similar fashion, the practice of electing individuals to these leading bodies is criticised, apparently as the substitution of 'artificially-assembled combinations of individuals' for what Trotsky appears to regard as naturally emerging leadership circles, such as the old Editorial Board and the Organising Committee. The result is, apparently, a 'state of siege' in the Party in which the powers granted to the Central Committee by the Party constitution could be used to reorganise the entire RSDLP in a manner similar to the*

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3 See Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 12: '9. Apart from the organisations established by the Party Congress, all other Party organisations are subject to approval by the Central Committee. All decisions by the Central Committee are binding on all Party organisations, which are also obliged to contribute sums, to be fixed by the Central Committee, to the Party's central treasury'.



way in which the Party leadership had been reorganised at Congress. This would amount to the driving of all but the most consistent Iskra supporters from all positions of responsibility in the Party, the result being a solidly Iskra Party apparatus that was detached from a rank-and-file Party membership made up primarily of ex-members of the factions that were defeated and dissolved at the Second Congress. One important consequence of this arrangement would, it seems, be the stifling of debate in the Party as any figure of influence who disagreed with the Party leadership could simply be removed from their post by means of administrative measures permitted to the Central Committee by the Party constitution.

There is little in the way of concrete evidence to support this gloomy assessment of Lenin's constitution which, if Pavlovich is to be believed, Trotsky previously defended 'foaming at the mouth'.<sup>4</sup> It is true that, in the debates on the powers of the Central Committee, Iskra members including Martov defended the right of the Central Committee to dissolve local committees where necessary and to create new ones.<sup>5</sup> This was intended to be used in cases where local groups had been infiltrated by spies or provocateurs and it is of course possible that such powers could be misused to persecute opponents of the Party leadership. However, the Martovite protest on this point comes prior to even one allegation of such abuse taking place, and given that Martov was previously in favour of strengthening the powers of the Central Committee, it is hard to take the criticisms voiced in the resolution seriously. In a similar fashion, the protest about the dominance of the Editorial Board over the Central Committee using the Party Council as a 'transmission mechanism' simply cannot be proven at this early stage, as neither the Council nor the Central Committee had even met in full at this point, still less had the Central Committee itself issued a protest about its treatment.

This absence of evidence, along with the haste with which the criticisms are made and their inconsistency with some previous statements issued by Martov and Trotsky, inevitably provokes the suspicion that the criticisms made in the resolution really only served as pretexts for demanding the reinstatement of the 'rejected' editors – Axelrod, Potresov and Zasulich – along with Martovite representation on the Central Committee.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of whether or not these suspicions are justified, it seems fairly clear that such demands are self-serving. The Martovites protest that it is the Editorial Board of the newspaper which forms the lynch pin of the 'state of siege' in the Party, despite the fact that, according to the Party constitution, rather more organisational powers reside with the

4 See Chapter 16.

5 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 355–6.

6 See points three and six of the resolution.



*Central Committee.<sup>7</sup> Having made this allegation and protested against it, they then demand a share of this allegedly dictatorial power for themselves, a demand seemingly based on the questionable and unprovable assurance that they would exercise it with greater discretion than the duly elected Lenin and Plekhanov, without any changes to the supposedly offending Party constitution. The demand for leadership positions therefore appears to reflect, at the very least, an unproven faith on the part of the Martovites in their own moral superiority over their opponents, which is less than attractive. At worst, it could be said to reflect a crudely egotistical outlook, in which principles such as the election of the Party leadership by Congress are cast aside when these elections do not yield the result desired by a particular clique, and various poorly-substantiated criticisms are evoked in an attempt to get these results overturned to the advantage of this clique.*

## Resolution Concerning the Tasks of Internal Party Struggle

*Adopted at a three-day conference of 17 supporters of the Second Congress minority, between 13 and 20 September 1903*

*LD Trotsky, Iu. O Martov*

*Noting that a tendency clearly – and in a whole series of questions triumphantly – emerged at the Second Congress of our Party, a tendency which sharply changed the previous tactics of Iskra and which imposed the legally reinforced power of a new Editorial Board on the ideological-educational and ideological-organisational influence of the newspaper;*

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<sup>7</sup> According to the rules (paragraph seven) the Party newspaper is simply responsible for 'the ideological leadership of the Party': no executive function is granted to it. The Central Committee, by contrast, 'organises committees, associations of committees and all other Party institutions, and directs their activities; it organises and conducts undertakings which are of importance for the Party as a whole; it allocates the Party's forces and resources, and has charge of the Party's central treasury; it investigates conflicts both between and within the different Party institutions and in general co-ordinates and directs all the Party's practical activity' (paragraph 6). It appears to carry out all these functions independent of the Editorial Board (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 11).

*Noting* that this tendency was embodied in the establishment of the Council with a definite method of composition, which is only a transmission mechanism for the administrative power of the new executive and a tool for its tutelage over the CC,<sup>8</sup> thus reducing the latter to the role of a simple auxiliary-technical apparatus;

*Noting* that such a way of operating would inevitably divide the Party into a self-contained, one-sidedly assembled central organisation on the one hand and a broad uncoordinated mass of Social-Democratic workers on the other, thus compromising the very idea of a united, fighting, strictly centralised Party; we recognise that it is necessary to conduct an energetic, principled struggle with the tendency of deformed centralism characterised above for the sake of the preservation and development of the unity of our Party, a struggle which prepares the public opinion of the Party for a Third Congress.

*Noting further* that systematic ideological struggle using the means normally employed within the Party is now unthinkable for us, given that the formal victory of the 'state of siege' tendency, established in a definite, artificially-assembled personal composition of the CC, the Editorial Board and consequently also the Council, signifies nothing other than, as far as possible, the complete abolition of intra-Party ideological struggle and its replacement by administrative measures;

*Noting* that such an organisation of the highest Party institutions is adapted, as it was put at the Congress, for the strict conduct of the 'state of siege' tactic, the prelude to which appeared to be a break with those who had played a leading role prior to the Congress through their literary and practical efforts, those who at the Congress fought against the new course, the close adherence to which could only bring about excommunications, exclusions and demotions, instead of the more complex, but exclusively positive, work of systematic organisational and ideological influence; we consider ourselves morally and politically obliged to conduct a practical-organisational struggle using organised forces and the employment of all means which, not placing us outside the Party and not compromising either the Party itself or the idea of its central institutions, can in the shortest time possible bring about a change in the personal composition of the higher institutions of the Party, an outcome which would guarantee the possibility of freely working on the ideological and organisational growth of the Party.<sup>9</sup>

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8 The Central Committee.

9 The editors of the *Leninskii Sbornik* state that at this point, Trotsky's handwriting ceases and is replaced by Martov's (Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, p. 246n).

- 1) To obtain the goals set by us, all means should be employed which, not placing us outside the Party, will broaden the sphere of our influence and will facilitate the bringing of our views to the attention of Party members.
- 2) In light of the fact that one of the causes conditioning the triumph of the disorganising tendency at the Congress was the weakness of the local committees and the limited consciousness of their members, we should take on the organisers' work in the localities and exercise influence through the local organisations on the central institutions of the Party, with the aim of the latter's transformation.
- 3) Whilst working in the localities, members of the opposition will refuse to take up places on the CC until its composition has been subjected to the changes indicated above, changes which would guarantee its working capability and the possibility of developing the institution into a real leader of the Party. ~~The minimal guarantee in this connection is the admittance onto the committee of two members of the opposition.~~<sup>10</sup>
- 4) Agitation based on criticism of the work of the Congress should set itself practical goals: i) the expression on the part of a committee of a negative attitude towards the politics of the 'state of siege' and towards those practical steps which both the Congress and the CC and CO<sup>11</sup> took in the spirit of this policy; ii) a struggle with all the tendencies of the Party centres that are directed towards the suppression of the freedom of action or of the opinion of individual members and organisations or towards the strengthening of a narrow-circle basis in the Party organisation; iii) the exposure of the lack of working capacity (and lack of independence) of the Party institutions created by the Congress, in so far as this is displayed in its politics, and pressure on the part of local committees with the goal of forcing a change in the composition of these institutions.
- 5) In relation to the CO in its current form, the opposition undertakes a boycott which is expressed in a refusal of all collaboration, active<sup>12</sup> assistance in the provision of material and so forth.

*Note:* this boycott does not exclude the use of the CO as an official Party institution for the printing of resolutions, letters to the editor, refutations and so forth amounting to the carrying out of the *responsibilities* of Party

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10 This sentence appears to have been added and then struck out during the course of the debate on the resolution, according to the *Leninskii Sbornik* editors (Ibid.).

11 The 'central organ', in other words, the Editorial Board of *Iskra*.

12 Inserted during the debate, according to the *Leninskii Sbornik* (Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, p. 246n).

- members to send all leaflets, reports and so forth issued in the localities to the Editorial Board.
- 6) The boycott of the CO is to be lifted only with the re-establishment of the old Editorial Board of *Iskra* or as soon as the CC allows the former Editorial Board of *Iskra* to carry out those tasks in the area of Party literature which are not within the capabilities of the current *Iskra* Editorial Board or which are repudiated by it from the point of view of the policy of the 'state of siege', as a separate group.
  - 7) The former Editorial Board of *Iskra* (and correspondents) are to form a literary group which will approach the CC, seeking from it the right to publish pamphlets and leaflets independently on all questions relating to agitational, propaganda and organisational work. This group sets itself, as its special tasks: i) the formation of a literary centre which, prior to the capture of the central institutions of the Party (or a change in the current circumstances), will bring together the 'opposition' elements in the Party; ii) the promotion of those tactical and organisational ideas which distinguish the 'opposition' from the 'majority' – literary struggle with the 'mailed fist' and 'state of siege' tendency; iii) serving the agitational needs of local organisations, acting as an appropriate publisher and assisting the committees in the organisation of literary work.
  - 8) If the CC does not permit the creation of such a group, it will seek a solution: a) in the formation of itself into a literary group attached to a local committee; b) in the private distribution of its output around individual committees for their local publication; c) in the publication of its output through a non-Party firm.
  - 9) If an arbitrary and clearly illegal interpretation of their rights on the part of the central institutions places us, against our will, in an illegal situation within the Party, the opposition will openly protest against the tactics of the central institutions, refusing to obey the illegal instructions and will continue its work (whilst appealing to a future Congress).<sup>13</sup>

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13 The words in brackets also appear to have been the result of an amendment introduced at the conference itself, according to Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, p. 246n.

## Iulii Martov, *The Struggle with the 'State of Siege' in the RSDLP*

*Martov's pamphlet, The Struggle with the 'State of Siege' in the RSDLP, was written in December 1903 and January 1904 and it served as a lengthy reply to Lenin's short public explanation, circulated in leaflet form, of why he had resigned from the Editorial Board of Iskra.<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet deals primarily with Lenin's representation of the disagreements between the 'Martovites' and the 'Leninists' during and after the Second Congress of the RSDLP, and the author tries to advance criticism of the latter's organisational views and practices. It serves as a useful source for historians interested in how the factional struggle played out in the post-Congress period as Martov reprints numerous resolutions and various letters from the local organisations of the RSDLP, the Central Committee, the leaders of the Martovite faction, Lenin and Krupskaya as part of the text. These indicate the views, positions and actions of the various groups within the RSDLP and demonstrate the presence of a struggle for influence among the local RSDLP organisations inside Russia by the supporters of both Lenin and Martov.*

*Martov's basic complaint against Lenin's leaflet is that it represents the 'Martovite' cause as being motivated primarily by the pursuit of positions on the Editorial Board of Iskra. In it, Lenin represents this pursuit as an attempt to overturn the results of the elections to the Editorial Board which took place at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, in which Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov had not been selected, whereas Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov had. Pointing out that the Congress had declared its decisions to be binding on all Party members, Lenin argues that the Martovites were disrupting the work of the Party by refusing to contribute articles to its newspaper, and by agitating within the Party's ranks against its elected leadership. He therefore rejects the idea that they are motivated in their activity by any definite organisational views such as their definition of a Party member, any objection to the relationship between the central Party newspaper and the Central Committee, or to the relationship between the Central Committee and the local committees of the Party.*

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<sup>1</sup> See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 118–24. The document was reprinted as Appendix 1 of *The State of Siege*, which is included in the translation below.

*Martov's response to this interpretation of his actions is at times disfigured by crude sarcasm and remarks of a personal character. Between the rhetorical flourishes, the argument is advanced that the relationship between the central Party newspaper and the Central Committee was inappropriate, in that it guaranteed the supremacy of the former over the latter and reduced the Central Committee to a technical body which carried out decisions taken by the Editorial Board, in which all political authority resided. The mechanism for this relationship was the Party Council, which would serve to impose the will of the Editorial Board on the Central Committee owing to the fixed majority in it (three against two) of Editorial Board delegates over Central Committee delegates. It is therefore claimed that the Martovite faction was formed primarily in opposition to this arrangement, that this opposition was manifested at the Second Congress of the RSDLP and that Lenin ignores this principled opposition in order to discredit the Martovites with accusations of place-seeking.*

*Martov's argument represents a distortion of what actually happened at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in so far as he remains silent on the question of the Iskra caucus meetings, which are referred to by Lenin, Pavlovich and Trotsky in their respective accounts of the Congress.<sup>2</sup> Martov's failure to discuss these meetings is a significant omission as, according to the accounts of Lenin and Pavlovich, it was at precisely these meetings that the split among the Iskra supporters first emerged, over the issue of candidates for the Central Committee and not over the various paragraphs of the RSDLP constitution. Martov's silence regarding them is all the more curious given the fact that Lenin's 'Account of the Second Congress of the RSDLP' had already been circulated by the time The State of Siege appeared, a circumstance alluded to by Fedor Ilich Dan (1871–1947) in Appendix III of the pamphlet. It was in this 'Account' that the caucus meetings were first discussed in detail.*

*Martov's argument about Lenin's interpretation of the split therefore has its flaws, and the reader may wish to consider whether this silence was connected to the fact that some of Martov's key allies, such as Dan and the Tomsk Committee, were at this stage arguing that the submission of the Iskra leadership to election at the RSDLP Congress was a mistake which prevented continuity in the Party leadership, and which invited 'practical' activists to have a say in a matter they scarcely understood. Such allies having*

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2 See Chapter 16 of the present collection; Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 24–5, pp. 28–9 pp. 119–20 and pp. 276–86; Trotsky 1970, pp. 160–1. They were also discussed in great detail at the Congress of the League Abroad (see Smidovich 1904, pp. 38–68), a meeting which is discussed in no small detail in Martov's pamphlet.

*taken this position, it could have been seen as a matter of embarrassment to Martov that the Leninists should then speak about the active role he had played in the discussion of candidates for election to the Central Committee in the caucus meetings. Indeed, one might conclude from this that Martov therefore maintained silence regarding these meetings in order to solidify his support among a certain section of the Party and to iron out some of the inconsistencies of his own position, albeit at the price of significantly weakening his rebuttal of Lenin's leaflet.*

*Despite the tenuous nature of the organisational arguments used to justify it, Martov launches a somewhat successful defence of the eventually victorious campaign to 'overturn' the results of the election to the Editorial Board of Iskra, which resulted in the co-option of himself and the editors who were not elected at Congress. He argues, with some credibility, that this campaign did not violate the letter of the Party constitution, pointing out that the Editorial Board had the right to co-opt and that there was little to prevent his faction from trying to influence the editors in this regard. He then makes the fairly effective argument that the success of the campaign showed that Lenin did not really enjoy the support of the majority of the Party, whatever the votes at Congress suggested. Finally, he appears to claim that, given the current Party constitution, only the old Editorial Board could prevent the Party from degenerating into an authoritarian internal regime, whereas one dominated by the Leninists could not.*

*The last of these arguments is evidently connected to Martov's contention that the Editorial Board represented the supreme executive power in the Party, though the reasoning behind this is far from clear. It could be that Martov believed that the 'state of siege' was primarily manifested through the practice of replacing and re-ordering personnel in the various Party bodies, so that they would, by means of purges and the like, be brought into line with Leninist thinking.<sup>3</sup> On this basis, he could argue that the elections to the Editorial Board represented just the first step in a series of changes planned by Lenin relating to the whole of the Party, and on these grounds he would be able to justify accepting editorial posts following Lenin's resignation, without making immediate alternations to the supposedly harmful Party constitution. In this case, the Martovites could simply declare that they were in favour of 'continuity' in terms of personnel and that they would use their dominant position in the board to ensure this remained the case throughout the Party apparatus. However, this argument is subject to the criticisms that it is self-*

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3 This argument appears in Martov's pamphlet, but only in the course of a letter to Lenin by the Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers. It was subsequently rehearsed by Plekhanov in his article 'Centralism and Bonapartism' in Chapter 21 of the present collection.



*serving, that it relies on an unproven assessment of Lenin's future intentions, that it undermines Martov's earlier assertion that the split was about the Party constitution, that it fails to reckon with Martov's apparent enthusiasm for breaking with 'continuity' in relation to the Central Committee during the Iskra caucus meetings at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, and that it was actually the Central Committee and not the Editorial Board which wielded most power in Party.*

*Martov's State of Siege is valuable for its portrayal of the various viewpoints that existed within the RSDLP during the period following the Party's Second Congress. Space in the pamphlet is given to the events and debates of the Second Congress of the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad – the official émigré organisation of the RSDLP since the Party Congress – which took place from 26–31 October 1903. Controversy was generated at this meeting, where the Martovites possessed a small majority, not only because of conflicting estimates of the recent Party Congress, but also because of the attempt by the RSDLP Central Committee to draft organisational rules for the League. As can be seen from the pamphlet, the Martovites resisted this idea, insisting that the League had the right to define its own organisational form and modes of activity. The result, which might be seen as a partial vindication of Martov's claims about a 'state of siege', was that the Central Committee's representative at the League Congress declared the meeting to have become unconstitutional and withdrew from it, taking the rest of the Leninists with him. Martov uses the incident to consolidate his claim that the Party had acquired an autocratic 'top-down' structure, but this claim probably needs to be viewed in light of the Leninist argument that the League played a special role in relation to the RSDLP as a whole, in so far as sections of it were involved in smuggling people, funds, literature and information into Russia. On these grounds, Lenin argued that its activity could not be viewed as a concern which was of no interest to the Central Committee, as the latter was charged with the overall direction of Party work. Apart from that, it seems clear that draft rules proposed by the Central Committee were not going to be imposed on the League without debate, and there is little actual evidence of authoritarian behaviour on the part of the Central Committee: ultimately the Martovites were invited to constitute a majority in the new League leadership by the Central Committee, a situation reflecting their small majority at the Congress itself.*

*As well as learning about the League Abroad, we get a fairly clear picture of the different attitudes towards the split in Iskra from the local committees of the RSDLP. The great majority of these appear to take a critical attitude towards Martov and his faction, and request that he takes up his place on the Editorial Board, thus co-operating with the Leninists. A minority defend him,*

*and in these statements of support can be found some quite original arguments, arguments which were not raised either at the Second Congress or by the émigré Martovites. The Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers clearly expresses the fear that excessive powers at the centre of the Party could lead to entire committees being purged of opponents of the leadership, the result being a complete failure of internal Party democracy. Conversely, the Tomsk committee in effect comes out against the idea of Party discipline based on a Party constitution, stating that it supports the Central Committee only because it happens to agree with its politics and that it does not recognise any obligatory ties either to the Central Committee or to Congress. Conversely, Lenin is criticised by one committee, Saratov, for his resignation from the Editorial Board, the Saratov group with some justification pointing out that he has no mandate for such a decision, which in effect overturned a decision of Congress by handing power to the outvoted faction. All these resolutions seem to demonstrate the presence of a fairly lively political atmosphere inside the RSDLP in which the rank-and-file, or at least its local leaders, are not afraid to speak out, to give their views and to challenge the wisdom of their émigré leaders.*

*The pamphlet addresses the circumstances and aftermath of Lenin's resignation from the Editorial Board of Iskra, which took place immediately after the end of the League Congress (1 November 1903 N.S.). This resignation allowed Plekhanov, as sole editor, to 'legally' co-opt his four former colleagues – Martov, Zasulich, Axelrod and Potresov – back onto the board, thus amply satisfying a key demand of the 'Martovites'. According to Martov, Lenin misrepresents the circumstances of his own resignation, as he declares that it took place because Plekhanov wanted to co-opt the remainder of the former Editorial Board and because he, Lenin, wanted peace in the Party and did not want to act as a barrier to this type of compromise. Evidence supporting Martov's objection to this version of events is furnished by this same Plekhanov, who claims in a letter written three months after the event that it was he who threatened to resign first, as Lenin would not compromise with the Martovites to a sufficient degree.<sup>4</sup> According to him, it was this threat that impelled Lenin to go, apparently on the grounds that the latter believed he needed Plekhanov's support to remain in an editorial role, an additional motive being that Lenin could better fight the Martovites from a position in the Central Committee, onto which he was soon co-opted. In relation to these claims, it is worth noting that they cannot actually be verified and that in the private conversations he cites (three months after they allegedly took place), Plekhanov presents his own role in what could be termed an immodestly positive light. Apart from that, Lenin's solution of going*

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4 See Appendix II of the pamphlet.

over to the Central Committee need not be understood as anything more than a stratagem, as it simply represented his migration from a body dominated by his opponents to one made up exclusively of his supporters. These two bodies would, of course, clash in the meetings of the Party Council, but in between these sessions they would each be able to carry out their responsibilities without the distraction of internal wrangling.

Martov concludes his pamphlet with a discussion of the Central Committee's attempts to make a final peace with his own faction through the agency of Krzhizhanovskii ('comrade Y'). 'Y' was preferred as a conduit for negotiations to Lengnik, owing to the latter's presence at the League Congress and his alleged attempt to impose organisational rules on the émigré organisation. This episode is interesting in so far as Martov seems to have correctly identified the presence of different shades of opinion in the Leninist Central Committee. These shades later proved to be important in so far as the more compromising elements came to dominate and eventually voted through the expulsion of Lenin from the group.<sup>5</sup> In the present pamphlet, Martov's assessment of this 'compromising' trend is perhaps a little optimistic, in so far as Krzhizhanovskii evidently did not have sufficient support at this stage<sup>6</sup> and appeared to be offering concessions on his own initiative, which were not supported by the Central Committee as a whole. On the basis of discussions between Krzhizhanovskii and his own faction, Martov seems to believe that his total victory is a foregone conclusion, when in fact most of the suggestions agreed upon were not realised for the best part of a year, and only then as a result of further unforeseen events. Significantly, these negotiations appear to have raised the question of limiting Lenin's freedom of expression, in the sense that the latter's right to publish an explanation of his departure from the Editorial Board was subject to debate, despite the fact that his and Martov's actions were already being widely discussed in the Party. In this sense they prefigure a later stage in the conflict in which the Central Committee tried to prevent

5 This took place at a Central Committee meeting held in Moscow in February 1905. At this point, Lenin was no longer playing much of a role in the body owing to his loss of support within it, and the decision had little effect as a police raid immediately captured the majority of Lenin's opponents. By this stage, Lenin's supporters were already working independently to organise a Third RSDLP Congress through an independent Organising Committee and the Bolshevik newspaper, *Vpered*.

6 By this stage, the three members of the Central Committee elected at the RSDLP Congress had co-opted numerous individuals, including: Maria Moiseevna Essen (1872–1956), Rosalia Zemliachka, Lev Halperin, Leonid Borisovich Krasin (1870–1926), Fedor Vasilievich Husarov (1875–1920) and Lenin. Thus, while both Noskov and Krzhizhanovskii showed evident tendencies towards compromise with the 'Martovites' in the autumn of 1903, they did not wield a decisive influence in the Central Committee.

*Lenin's publication of One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back and his continued agitation for a Third RSDLP Congress, a threat which played no small part in Lenin's final break with the Central Committee.*

## The Struggle with the 'State of Siege' in the Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party, with Additional Letters by Lenin, Plekhanov and Dan (An Answer to Lenin's Letter)

*Iu O Martov*

*Russian Social-Democratic and Labour Party*

*L Martov – Nouvelles controverses*

1904, Ed. Pfeffer Press, Boulev. de Plainpalais 6, Genève

*Pro domo sua*<sup>7</sup>

I have asked the comrades of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* for permission to answer Lenin's letter ('Why I resigned from the Editorial Board')<sup>8</sup> over my own signature and, even though I received this permission, did not set about fulfilling the task I had taken on without hesitation. I experienced further hesitancy at certain points in the pamphlet. This new step, which I have had to take in a struggle with comrades who want struggle, means too much to me.

Still, I have to take this step. Not just because, along with all comrades sharing my views, I understand the absolute necessity of the Party trying as quickly as possible to put an end to that phase of development which is marked by division among the so-called '*Iskra*-ites'. Not only because I feel a responsibility to speak out against coarse and seriously unjust accusations, which Lenin hurled at my closest comrades on the Editorial Board and at the most valuable

<sup>7</sup> 'Serving his own interests' (Latin).

<sup>8</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 118–24 ('Letter to *Iskra*: Why I Resigned from the Editorial Board of *Iskra*'). This letter, initially printed in leaflet form, was reprinted by Martov as Appendix I to the *State of Siege* and this appendix is included in the present translation.

and seasoned activists of our Party in his letter; not just because these accusations had to be refuted in the interests of improving the atmosphere which has been created recently. It seems to me that I had to take it in so far as a certain degree of responsibility falls to me for that turn which Party affairs took as a result of the 'liquidation of the third period', which came about 'under the sign of *Iskra*'.

I am not going to 'repent' in this preface, as I find this type of activity to be utterly useless and something which can be best carried out in private. I only wish for the opportunity to draw certain conclusions as objectively as possible, conclusions which are necessary if the present situation is to be understood clearly.

Comrades know that the 'state of siege' structure against which we are now fighting should, according to the designs of its architects, rest on the firm foundations of a small group of individuals in whom the Majority invested their trust. The present writer was to have been included in these ground works – they counted on him. I dare say this was not in the capacity of 'unshakeable granite rock' but in the capacity of a little cement. I do not know how strongly this fact will compromise me in the eyes of comrades, but it made me personally investigate many things and consider to what degree I am guilty of leading these architects into temptation. As a result of this work, I came to the conclusion that I should write the present pamphlet.

The fact of the matter is this. No picture of the 'state of siege', viewed as something established by the 'will of the Party' as its normal mode of life, danced before my eyes, I fought in the most definite manner within the *Iskra* organisation against tendencies which could have made this situation inevitable. My draft of the Party rules, with which I familiarised comrade Lenin and a number of 'practicals' in the two months leading up to the Congress, expressed my negative attitude towards 'a hypertrophy of centralism'.<sup>9</sup> (With the exception of some secondary details, the unsatisfactory character of which is demonstrated by our experience with the rules currently in operation, I could still put my name to this project.) If I declined to submit this project to the Congress, then this was only the result of my *Iskra* education which, in the first place, impressed on me – as it did in the majority of *Iskra*-ites – a scornful attitude towards rules in general and their significance for the goals being pursued by the Party; and which secondly compelled me to avoid the introduction of any type of dissonance

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9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 244–7. Lenin reproduces this draft in its entirety in his pamphlet, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*.

in the tactics of that basic organisational core which was *Iskra*.<sup>10</sup> Given that, having familiarised himself with my project, comrade Lenin created his alternative draft and made public his intention to present it at the Congress in his name and not through an editorial commission, and given that the author of *What Is To Be Done?* and 'A Letter to Comrades'<sup>11</sup> could pretend to be reckoned a 'specialist' in organisational questions, I considered it more convenient to withdraw my own basic draft in order to speak at the Congress only against those parts of Lenin's project which seemed to me absolutely incompatible with the interests of the Party (the guardianship of the CO over the CC,<sup>12</sup> the supervision by the CO of the composition of the latter and so forth). Once again, the certainty that the real issue lay not in the rules but in the 'actual constitution' which, as it seemed both to myself and many other Party members, is defined by the unity of the entire Party around a nucleus of professional revolutionaries who have won the trust of members through their work, are united under a banner of common ideas and are capable of straightening out in practice the defects and shortcomings of rules which we had to write without having any experience of formal organisational relations between separate parts of the Party, played a not unimportant role in this decision.

The events at the Congress showed that the basic assumption behind this scheme – the certainty that a definite organisational nucleus would 'naturally' absorb all of the most influential Party forces – was without foundation. Various nuances came to light among the representatives of the Party and probably the most 'consistent' of these inevitably proved to be the one which, sooner than the others, freed the members of isolated Party groups from the ties which had hitherto held them together. Having from the very beginning come out separately from the Editorial Board and from the *Iskra* organisation with his draft rules, comrade Lenin, from the very first stages of our separation at the Congress, appealed 'to everybody' and not only to members of the actual 'nucleus'. This was his right, and our mistake – i.e. that of the Minority – consisted in our failing to notice in a timely manner the approaching neces-

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10 This same consideration, as far as I know, induced several members of the Organising Committee who disagreed with the draft rules of Comrade Lenin to reject the idea of presenting an alternative draft and to limit themselves to the moving of partial amendments to Lenin's draft [Martov's footnote].

11 It seems that Martov is here referring to Lenin's 'A Letter to a Comrade on Organisational Tasks' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 231–52).

12 This refers to the alleged guardianship of the 'central organ' (the central RSDLP newspaper – *Iskra*) over the 'Central Committee', one of the key complaints of the group around Martov in relation to Lenin's Party constitution.

sity, thanks to the 'turn' on the part of Lenin and his allies, of immediately emphasising our disagreement with the 'hard' wing of the *Iskra*-ites in the sharpest form possible. Together with this, in order to present our draft and to provoke principled debates on the entire line of the organisational question as a whole, we – adopting tactics suggested by the way matters stood prior to the Congress – limited ourselves to the introduction of amendments, concentrated our 'attack' on the most 'harmful' points and in this way not only assisted the 'duty-free' passage of some sufficiently 'hard' points, but in certain cases, as was noted in *Iskra* No. 53 ('Our Congress'),<sup>13</sup> we overlooked the entirely healthy kernel in the criticism issuing from the 'anti-*Iskra*' elements of the Congress. In the name of preserving the unity of the *Iskra* nucleus, we (I more than others) thus weakened the force of our opposition to certain tendencies that we had previously criticised; indeed we sometimes weakened it in precisely those cases in which our more energetic opposition could have proved very useful. I think that this mistake is made entirely explicable by the sharpness of the passing over from the political life of a narrow circle to the environment of a Party-sized (so to speak) event for all of us (probably, some excesses in the opposite camp can be explained by this very same reason). This same sharp passing over seemingly made possible the greatest of the particular mistakes committed by me personally – I have in view my role in the little conflict which took place during the third session of the Congress between the majority of the 'Iskra-ites' and the Organising Committee. This little conflict over an insignificant question was destined to leave its impression on the course of the work of the entire Congress. Speaking along with others against the suggestion introduced by the OC, I thought I was fighting against this private suggestion

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13 This article gives an assessment of the Second RSDLP Congress, its achievements and its significance. It presents the conflict over the Party programme at the Congress as a clash between revisionism and orthodox Marxism and the debates on the constitution as the result of an insufficient degree of pre-Congress discussion on the practicalities of creating a centralised Party apparatus. Acknowledging a split among the *Iskra* supporters, it reproaches one section of them with a 'bureaucratic' attitude towards achieving centralism, based on the creation of rules and the adherence to Congress decisions whilst showing little regard for the practical problem of connecting the elected leadership of the Party to the local organisations in Russia. It observes that centralism cannot simply consist in transferring the rights of local committees to the central bodies of the Party and expresses sympathy for the rights of the former, along with regret that the Minority paid too much attention to the relations between the leading bodies of the Party, and not enough to the rights of the local organisations. The struggle over places on the central bodies is passed over in silence, though changes in the Editorial Board are noted, without explanation, on the front page of this issue of *Iskra*.



and against this alone. In fact it turned out that I was taking an active part in events which Lenin later termed 'the crushing of the Organising Committee', the crushing of the only actual centre that was in a position, owing to its influence, to paralyse the harmful tendencies that were subsequently displayed at the Congress on the part of the *Iskra* centre. What is more – this was the only centre organised, albeit with the help of *Iskra*, on a much broader, Party basis than the one on which the 'circle-organisation' *Iskra* could have been founded. Subsequent events showed that the aforementioned 'crushing' paved the way for the proclamation of a 'state of siege' which was being employed to incite the mistrust of the mass of delegates – first of all towards the OC in particular, and then towards every independent 'practical' centre. Not having noted at the time how the clash with the OC could be used by those who, at the base of their organisational plan, had placed 'the strengthening of the state of siege' more or less consciously, by means of the hegemony of the CO over the CC, I at first came out *bone fide* against a definite step of the OC, which seemed to me mistaken and, after that, as I have noted, I did not demonstrate a sufficiently energetic opposition to an onslaught, the consequences of which I mentioned above. If *Iskra* had remained united, the matter could have easily been resolved. But precisely this incident with the Organising Committee introduced a division among the '*Iskra*-ites' in so far as different estimates of the political meaning of the clash that had just taken place cast a bright light on the differing positions of two parts of the organisation. Having seen that he was almost alone among the various influential members of *Iskra* present at the Congress, comrade Lenin appealed to the majority of local activists in order to build his system on their shoulders.<sup>14</sup>

I am not able to judge how skilfully and decisively I acted at the Congress beyond the point at which the meaning of all that has been described came to be understood by the Minority, and we were presented with the fact of the 'state of siege' structure rapidly being built before our very eyes, something which, I repeat, had never been previously described either to me or to the majority of *Iskra* activists. I also do not presume to judge how much the certainty that the unity of the *Iskra* nucleus should be preserved at all costs, a certainty shaped by the previous success of *Iskra*'s work, 'justified' the mistake. To a certain degree, those who are defeated because they did

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14 Does this mean that those who are convinced that it was Lenin and not the Minority who conducted a Party rather than a circle policy are right? Not at all. Having liberated himself from the 'control and management' of that nucleus which had hitherto given a lead to Party work, Lenin appealed to the entire Party in order to perpetuate the dominion over the Party of a still narrower and more artificially selected circle [Martov's footnote].

not reckon with any given factor in their calculations are always 'guilty'. But consciousness of an already committed tactical mistake and, consequently, of the share of the responsibility falling to us for the unsuccessful part of the results of the Congress compelled me, along with all the Minority, to moderate the conscious forms of our own struggle against the regime that was declared at the Congress. Recognising that we could have – with greater, shall we say, perspicacity – prevented a few of the wrongdoings that were committed, we were psychologically unable to immediately declare an all-out, merciless war against the principles of the 'state of siege'.

I personally think that the Minority was right in this respect. It was necessary to give the Party time to familiarise itself with the positive and negative results of the Congress. It was necessary to give the Majority time to test its principles in practice; perhaps practice would 'soften' some of these principles.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. Avoiding an open clash in every sphere between two systems of organisational views proved impossible. In such a situation, all the *odium* for the uprising against the 'state of siege' should with every justification be taken by the present writer, in the capacity of a member of the Minority who, at the time, underestimated certain dangers and who, perhaps because of this, could even be reckoned by the architects of the 'state of siege' as one of those individuals who were initially less harmful and relatively sparing towards the 'triumph of the victors'.

6 February 1904

## I      Something about Attempts to Overturn Certain Decisions

We are obliged to give a sufficiently detailed reply to Lenin's short letter.<sup>15</sup> For this short little letter manages, in six pages, to give a condensed extract of all those distortions of the truth that were aimed against the so-called Minority in the Party.

Comrade Lenin is answering the article, 'Our Congress', which is to be found in *Iskra* No. 53. He argues that this article gives 'a completely untrue account of that not very profound but very disorganising division among the *Iskra*-ites which the Congress gave rise to'.

And why indeed is the account of this division in No. 53 untrue? Because 'nobody even with a magnifying glass can observe even one genuinely serious reason for a division, no-one can find even the shadow of an explanation for

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15      See footnote 8 of this chapter.

such a phenomenon as a change in the composition of the Editorial Board of the CO, no-one can find even a semblance of valid reasons for my departure from the editorial college'. Comrade Lenin fails to see only one thing: that the goal of explaining such evidently epoch-shaping phenomena as the changes in the composition of the Editorial Board of the CO after the Congress did not even enter *Iskra's* collective head, just as it did not try to explain in its articles 'such phenomena' as the non-confirmation at the Congress of the Editorial Board which had led *Iskra* over the course of two-and-a-half years. It has not entered into these explanations because it does not consider conveying the circumstances capable of providing such an explanation beyond the boundaries of a narrow circle of members of the Party to be particularly convenient.<sup>16</sup> Having been so kind as to try and rectify *Iskra's* omission, comrade Lenin tried to explain to us why he actually left the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, but he did not want to spare even a couple of lines for the question of why, at the Congress, he sought to change the composition of the old Editorial Board. Perhaps this too is 'not in the least a personal question', comrade Lenin?<sup>17</sup> One would have thought that, having pointed to the essence of two tendencies which emerged as a result of organisational discussions at the Congress, it could be explained to every well-informed reader why – under a definite degree of pressure caused by struggle – the representatives of these two tendencies sharply clashed during the elections of the central institutions of the Party. As to the kind of link that exists between this clash and the subsequent self-removal of comrade Lenin following the Congress – we do not reckon that we have a right to talk about it so long as Lenin does not consider it necessary to talk to the public about it. Equally, we do not pretend to point to 'a semblance of valid reasons for the departure' of comrade Lenin from the Editorial Board. To find even 'a semblance of valid reasons' for the political behaviour of comrade Lenin exceeds the measure of understanding granted to us.

Be that as it may, typical of this behaviour is the presentation of the following problem: the article about the Party Congress sins by not giving a key to the understanding of the reasons for the departure of comrade Lenin from the Editorial Board of the CO! Thus it is clear that the attention of comrade Lenin at the present time is completely absorbed not by the interests of Party politics, but by circle intrigue. From the genuinely-political perspective, the disagreements which were revealed during the discussion of organisational

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16 Readers may wish to consider the resolution of the Minority's conference in September 1903 (Chapter 17) before judging the sincerity of this argument.

17 This is a sarcastic reference to the opening sentence of Lenin's 'Why I Resigned from the Editorial Board of *Iskra*'.

questions cannot but exercise a profound influence on the future course of Party work, whereas the fact of Lenin's sojourn in a given body or his departure from it – for all the significance of the role played by comrade Lenin in our Party – finds itself entirely dependent on some upheaval or other in the development of these organisational disagreements and of itself cannot have any influence on the fate of our now sufficiently strengthened Party.

We said in No. 53 that the '*Iskra*-ites' divided at the Congress over the question of the organisation of the Party Centres, over the question of the relations between the CO and the CC, and in connection with this, over the methods of conducting centralism.

'Really?' asks Lenin, 'did we not *diverge on the question of* the personal composition of the Centres, on the question of whether we should permit a boycott of these Centres owing to dissatisfaction with the personnel elected at Congress, the disorganisation of practical work and the overturning of the decisions of the Party Congress in order to please some *circle* of émigré Social Democrats of the League majority type?'

First of all, when we speak about our 'divergence' at the Congress (and only this is discussed in No. 53), the allegation that we 'separated over the question of the personal composition of the Centres' appears to be untrue. If, for the resolution of the question of the CO, it was necessary to choose between two definitive combinations, a six and three member board (here, the controversial question took on the character of a dilemma: confirmation or election?), then when it came to the election of the CC, as is well-known to comrade Lenin and as is clear from the protocols of the Congress, the Majority diverged from the Minority over the question of the system of elections and refused to participate in the vote, when a system had been adopted which, in its opinion, would not protect the interests of the Party.

Secondly, comrade Lenin skips without further ado from the Party Congress, the only thing mentioned in our article, to a much later moment in order to ask us: 'did we not diverge over the question of whether we should permit', because of its more or less disrespectful motives, 'boycott, disorganising, overturning' and so forth? But, comrade Lenin, we could not have 'diverged' with you as a result of this – precisely due to the fact that we have not discussed these questions with you up to now; indeed, our trying to talk to you about these questions was pointless for, as you well know, you yourself never tried to talk to us about the 'permissibility' of any of our actions and preferred an easier method of administrative reprisal to the labour-intensive method of convincing us of their 'impermissibility', reprisals assisted by demagogic persecution, a sample of which is given in your letter. Therefore it is not surprising that our 'divergence' on this question after the Congress inevitably took the

following form: you made administrative gesticulations, whilst we, the Minority, answered with Homeric laughter. What sort of divergence do we have here, comrade Lenin? You had not even tried to seek a *rapprochement* with us prior to the question of 'permissibility' appearing on the scene.

We will provide examples of the administrative gesticulations in their proper place, where we will also analyse the factual side of all these absurd accusations of 'disorganisation' and similar, whilst for the moment limiting ourselves to the determination of some *a priori*, which will make following comrade Lenin down his chosen road easier.

If comrade Lenin maintains that he broke with us on the question of the permissibility of 'altering the decisions of the Party Congress to please an émigré circle', then he without doubt intends to accuse someone of a grievous offence against Party duty. But, in undertaking this attempt and without noticing it, he also accuses the Congress itself, which has apparently taken decisions of a type that *could* be overturned by an émigré circle. If the decisions of Congress hung in the air to such a degree that they could have been 'overturned' by any circle whatsoever, this would have meant that the will of the Party did not stand behind these decisions and that they carried an accidental character. Neither a circle nor an individual member of the Party can be accused of aspiring to 'overturn the decisions of Congress'. Every member of the Party, every group always tries to 'overturn' that which, in its opinion, is at odds with Party interests or which insufficiently answers to these interests. Did not comrade Lenin, after §1 of the rules had placed what were, in his opinion, false principles into the basis of the Party, 'take revenge' during the discussion of the later points of these rules in order to 'overturn' the established decision of the Congress in much the same fashion – with the purpose of reducing the possibility of consequences that, in his opinion, were harmful, consequences which could have resulted from the points accepted by the Party? After the Congress had, despite the opinion of comrade Lenin, determined that the Council of the Party was not to be elected by Congress, but appointed by the CO and the CC (apart from one member), did not Lenin set himself the task of limiting the number of members of the Editorial Board being elected by Congress in order, similarly, to predetermine the composition of a part of the Council and, consequently, to 'overturn' the already-decided §5 of the rules? It is clear that only such 'alterations' can put right the unavoidable mistakes and deviations in Party work and that those who see a mistake in some act or other cannot help but strive towards the 'overturning' of what has been done.

But comrade Lenin thinks it is one thing when the Party itself does the overturning and another when it is a circle, what is more an émigré circle! But here the question arises: where actually was the alteration of Party decisions

by a circle? Which decision are you speaking about, comrade Lenin? Clearly, the decision to elect three people to the Editorial Board of the CO. But overturning this decision would be factually impossible. True, Congress elected not three but two people, having provided them with the right to unlimited changes to the board, in accordance with §12 of the rules. If those elected afterwards decided to bring into their collective those same individuals who were not chosen by the Congress, then they would be exercising their indisputable right as, to repeat, the Party rules did not establish any limit to this right. But what about co-opting those very same individuals who were not approved by the Congress (as comrade Lenin will ask us, as *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia* were asking (*les beaux esprits se rencontrent*),<sup>18</sup> as were several comrades from the Majority)? Did the non-election of the old Editorial Board signify a definite wish to not have Zasulich, Axelrod and Starover on the board? If that is the case, comrade Lenin, how will you explain the fact that both you and your most visible associates at the Party Congress categorically denied all possibility of precisely such an interpretation of Congress's vote to not approve the Editorial Board of *Iskra*? How will you explain the announcement that the substitution of the 'six' for the 'three' was occasioned by exclusively technical reasons – the interests of simplifying the editorial work? How will you explain the speech expressing this idea on the part of one of the undisputed leaders of the Majority, comrade Glebov?<sup>19</sup> How do you explain the words of another still more prominent leader, the notorious comrade Pavlovich who, answering the accusation that the resolution on the election of a trio signified nothing more than the senseless destruction of the old Editorial Board, announced: 'I remind you of the right of co-option',<sup>20</sup> in other words, the co-option by the three chosen individuals of the remaining – unelected – members of the board, if this were to prove necessary. How will you explain your own categorical protest against my announcement that the rejection of the old Editorial Board represented 'a substantial limitation to that vote of confidence in *Iskra* which was taken by Congress after the acceptance of the programme'?<sup>21</sup> And, if it is certain that the decision of Congress, which consisted in the rejection of the old Editorial Board, must be understood as a wish on the part of the Party

18 *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia* was a Populist newspaper which appeared from 1900–5 and which played a role in the formation of the Socialist-Revolutionary ('Essar') Party. Lenin wrote an article about the agrarian programme of this Party entitled '*Les Beaux Esprits Se Rencontrent*' for *Iskra* No. 38 in April 1903 (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 431–5), noting its similarity to the ideas of the German revisionist Eduard David (1863–1930).

19 Noskov.

20 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 428.

21 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 431, p. 433.

to not see three definite individuals on the Editorial Board then how, comrade Lenin, will you explain the fact that even at the Congress, on the last day, you sent comrade Glebov to me with the suggestion of co-opting these same individuals, if I would agree to enter the board and if we four would give one definite commitment to you? How will you explain all this, comrade Lenin, if 'the overturning of the decisions made by the Congress' constitutes a political crime? Perhaps it is all explained by the fact that the commitment just mentioned ran as follows: 'we are obliged to elect two delegates from the CO to the Party Council ...', comrade Lenin?<sup>22</sup>

It goes without saying that for those who firmly deny the presence of profound disagreements between the Majority and the Minority (and Lenin does this), for those whose attitude to the concept 'Party leadership' in this situation bears the seriousness of a politician and not the opportunist light-mindedness of a demagogue (and the latter is precisely what characterises the manner of comrade Lenin) – for these people, even the formulation of the question in the way comrade Lenin attempted to ask it is unthinkable. The Party, when it elects definite individuals to a definite body, at the same time 'does not elect' all the remaining possible and impossible candidates. Every broadening of the composition of the elected body by means of co-optation brings into it individuals 'unelected' in this sense, and the invitation of the latter by those who were elected at the Congress transfers to them the 'grace' of election, as if these individuals were among the elected from the start. From Congress to Congress and by the 'natural' method of self-replenishment, the CC can completely change its composition relative to the one which was first elected, and along with this basic change in personal composition, the political physiognomy of this institution can also change imperceptibly and gradually. Suppose that the first three members of the CC, who were elected at Congress, co-opt new members and that on any important problem (for example on the question of tactics in relation to the 'Opposition') they prove to be a minority in the broadened collective. Can one speak in this case of the 'overturning' of Congress decisions by a vote of this body? This is impossible, if only we remember that the Social-Democratic Party formulates its policy not through the composition of its responsible institutions, but through decisions of a programmatic, tactical and organisational character which place tight

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22 This is an allusion to the fact that Lenin was at this stage willing to co-opt the three 'rejected' editors on condition that only one of the Editorial Board's two delegates to the Party Council came from the Martov group (Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, pp. 213–14). Martov is making the point that Lenin would only offer concessions provided that his own faction's control over the RSDLP's leading institutions overall was not undermined.



limits on any such composition; if we remember that we elect our responsible representatives at our Congress and not 'leaders' in the sense in which Schweitzer was the leader of the Lassalleans.<sup>23</sup> Only by understanding the act of election in this 'Schweitzerian' manner can one see the 'refashioning' of the Party's will in the self-reinforcement of an elected body in any given direction. And such a notion of the significance of our Party institutions stands in closest connection with that simplification of the tasks of a Social-Democratic organisation which Pavel Axelrod spoke about in his splendid article (*Iskra* No. 55).<sup>24</sup> Only when we substitute the question of the socialist self-awareness of the members of the Party and the socialist consciousness of their work for the question of the 'reliability' of 'centres' invested with forcible power can we talk ourselves into seeing, in the act of elections, the specific expression of the 'will of the Party' *par excellence*. Of course, this plebiscitic-Napoleonic idea of the organisation of the central institutions entirely explains that fanaticism or 'fury' (to use his own expression) by means of which comrade Lenin concentrated the whole struggle at the Congress on this question, but it also explains to a sufficient degree why all the more conscious (in the Social-Democratic sense of the word) members of the Party cannot avoid seeing a great danger to our cause in the corresponding regime.

Thus, we do not need to speak with indignation about an 'overturn' regarding the changing of the board elected at Congress, and it is necessary to recognise the right – both outside and after the Congress – to attempt to influence the composition and politics of any given body. If this influence comes from an insignificant 'circle' and if motivations of a personal character lie behind it, an organisation which is based on the conscious will of the majority will always manage to deal with this opposition and it will not have to cry out pathetic words about 'disorganisation'. If such a will does not stand behind it but, on the contrary, the 'influencing' ones represent a politically significant

23 Johann Baptist von Schweitzer (1833–75), president of the 'Lassallean' General German Workers' Association from 1864–71.

24 Aksel'rod 1903. The main thrust of this article was that the triumph of orthodox Marxism at the Second Congress of the RSDLP was theoretical rather than practical. This was owing to the fact that the working class, having entered into political struggle against the autocracy at the beginning of 1901, far from leading other sections of society, as Russian Social Democrats had assumed would be the case, had actually followed a section of the bourgeoisie – the students – by joining in their demonstrations for political freedom. This submission by workers to the leadership of an alien class is presented as evidence of the fact that the 'Economist' tendency in reality dominated in the Russian workers' movement in spite of its defeat within the RSDLP, the latter being criticised as an intelligentsia-dominated organisation with limited connections to movements of rebellious workers.

part of the Party, strong on account of their broader understanding of Party tasks, then no loud words can prevent this group from testing its forces – if this is demanded – in an attempt to change the composition of any given body. Such words can only poison the atmosphere of Party life for a time.

But perhaps comrade Lenin is indignant not at the attempt at influence but at its form, at the ‘boycott’ with a presentation of demands? We will say more later about the ‘boycott’ and show how it expressed itself, why it was unavoidable and why it cannot be called an impermissible method of struggle within the Party. For the present, we will cite the two following tirades to comrade Lenin, who has permitted himself to speak with indignation about these ‘methods of struggle’.

It would be a mistake to think that the impossibility of genuinely ‘democratic’ control makes members of a revolutionary organisation uncontrollable: it is not for them to think about toy forms of democracy, though they feel their responsibility very keenly, knowing that a real revolutionary will not stop at any means in order to be delivered from a useless member of an organisation.<sup>25</sup>

No rules provide a remedy for this (for the incapacity of an institution invested with great power), which can be provided only by means of ‘comradely influence’ – starting with the resolution of each and every subgroup and continuing through their appeals to the CO and the CC, and ending (in the worst case) with the overthrow of a completely incapable power. [He is speaking about the relations between the committees and the groups subordinated to them].<sup>26</sup>

Between ‘unconditional obedience’ and not being constrained ‘by any means’ is to be found a whole gradation of transitional means – right up to ‘boycott’, up to a refusal to work under those institutions which appear under given circumstances to be bearers of harmful tendencies; and the very same intermediate links can be found between ‘resolutions’ and ‘the overthrow of an incapable power’. Generally speaking, such an overthrow is only appropriate ‘in the very worst cases’ and in certain circumstances it is impossible to prevent an unavoidable onset of this worst case except by obtaining the reorganisation of the corresponding ‘power’. We beg comrade Lenin to remember

25 *What Is To Be Done?* p. 108 [Martov’s footnote – Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 480].

26 The ‘Letter to a St Petersburg Comrade’ of N Lenin [Martov’s footnote – Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, p. 240].

this and repeat to him one more time that attempts of this type can never be harmful. Those who value the vitality of their Party to any degree can never doubt that, if these attempts are prompted by vanity, immaturity of thought or personal claims, they will remain fruitless and overcoming this 'friction' will not present any difficulties. Even if these attempts put a power which, for whatever motives, will not yield into a difficult position, this will only mean that the interests of the Party, the interests of the movement, stand behind them. And every Party power must bow down before these interests and those who, in the name of some formal principle or other, some legal fiction, some newly dressed up and never decently buried 'democratic' principle dare to ignore these interests of the Social-Democratic movement, are traitors to the Party.

And how characteristic for the present state of affairs is this appeal to the unlawfulness of 'attempts at overturning' on the part of the same Lenin who only yesterday thundered against a 'democratism' which was inapplicable, in his words, to the conditions of Russian reality and who called for a struggle of conscious revolutionaries 'with all means', 'culminating in the overthrow of an incapable power' as an unavoidable and uniquely reliable corrective to this absence of 'democratism'. It is impossible to better demonstrate the political flabbiness of the so-called 'hard' tendency than by demonstrating this scandalous contradiction between the revolutionary phrases of yesterday and the chancellor-Bonapartist ones of today! Today blond, tomorrow brown-haired – this is how tendencies already condemned to perish in the process of political development manifest themselves!

## II 'Three Truths'

And it is only those tendencies that manifest themselves in a negation of their existence as tendencies that we find in comrade Lenin's letter.

Comrade Lenin does not express any special tendency opposed to the Minority tendency. The division between the 'hard' and the 'soft' which took place at the Congress did not have any principled character – only the argument about the first paragraph of the Party rules had a principled meaning ('Letter', p. 7). On the question of 'the distinction between shades of *Iskra*-ites' Lenin answers that, apart from the §1 already indicated, this difference is expressed: a)<sup>27</sup> 'in the fact that, according to the Majority, it is both possible and obligatory to advance one's opinions in the Party independent of any refashioning of the personal composition of the Centres'. The comical

27 No further items on this purported list appear in the text.

situation into which he has fallen in presenting this thesis, he, who 'advanced his opinions in the Party' at the Congress mainly by the same method of 'changing the personal composition' – of the Editorial Board of the CO, for example – has already been pointed out to comrade Lenin. The distinction, according to Lenin, is further expressed in the fact that 'in the opinion of the Majority, the blame for formalism and bureaucratism falls on those who, by removing themselves from work under the guidance of the Centres, reduce the possibility of conducting work on a non-formalist basis'. So, there was work, was there, comrade Lenin? By the way, we have to recognise that this formulation really is unwise. The 'difference of shades' consists in the fact that the Majority puts the blame for its own formalism on the Minority! One must admit, such a 'shade of thought' is very similar to that of Mitrofan Prostakov,<sup>28</sup> which sometimes moved this vulgariser to shed tears over his poor mama, who was 'so tired with beating papa'!<sup>29</sup> The Minority shade commits the sins of refusing to blame papa, of not permitting excuses under any circumstances for the 'formalistic' conduct of revolutionary work and, when it comes across such behaviour, of laying the blame entirely on the formalists themselves!

Be that as it may, according to Lenin, the 'shades' formed themselves on the basis of an organisational war between the 'Centres' and the 'Opposition', which came into being owing to 'dissatisfaction with the personal composition of the Centres'. Lenin says that there was no matter of principle in the division of the *Iskra*-ites at Congress over the question of the organisation of the CC, the CO and the Council and that no trends were noticeable. The mistrust of the 'Opposition' towards the Centres elected at Congress is simply the result of their candidates not being accepted, but comrade Lenin does not consider it necessary to tell us why they should have had candidates in the first place. Were the different candidates not clearly representatives of different coteries, comrade Lenin? What a delightful image you give to the public of our Congress!

Thus comrade Lenin denies, and is even certain of the fact that we 'perfectly well know' that disagreements of a principled character in organisational questions – apart from the question of §1 – do not exist. Comrade Lenin

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28 The reference is to a character in a satirical play by Denis Ivanovich Fonvizin (1744–92), *The Minor*, first performed in 1782 (Fonvizin 1959).

29 In practice this means: 'in the onslaught of the Opposition' there was 'something which provoked the CC to entirely exceptional measures'. We will speak about this classic phrase below in connection with the 'onslaught'. But what a style has been developed by our little Robespierres! 'State of Siege', 'exceptional measures', will we not soon be reduced to 'less than good intentions?' [Martov's footnote].

wrote in No. 53 of *Iskra* that the public should know 'everything'.<sup>30</sup> We will tell them everything that comrade Lenin has said at different times about the significance of organisational debates at the Congress.

*The First Stage of the Question Regarding the Supervision of the Central Committee by the Editorial Board*

The location – the Party Congress. The 26th session is in progress. Arguments are taking place about 'mutual co-option', about whether the co-option of new members to the CC can take place without the agreement of the Editorial Board of the CO. Comrade Lenin, answering those who are revolting against this tutelage over the CC, announces (*Minutes*, p. 277):<sup>31</sup>

The mutual agreement of the two Centres is a necessary condition of harmony. Here, the issue is one of the uncoupling of the two Centres. Whoever does not want a split should take the trouble to achieve harmony. From the life of the Party it is known that there have been people who have introduced splits. This question is principled, important and the entire future of our Party could depend on it.

The conclusions of comrade Lenin do not convince Congress and the latter, by 26 votes against 24,<sup>32</sup> accepts the suggestion disputed by comrade Lenin.

Thus the question is a principled one about the fate of the Party. Accordingly, comrade Lenin,

*The Second Stage of the Very Same Question*<sup>33</sup>

giving an answer on the Party Congress at the Congress of the League said:

Once the first § of the rules was spoiled, we had to bind the broken pot as tightly as possible, with a double knot. The fear had naturally arisen that they were scheming (!) against us and were going to leave us in a tight

30 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 115. This demand appears in a letter to *Iskra* representing a reply to Plekhanov's article 'What is Not to Be Done', which was printed in the previous issue. Plekhanov's article is in Chapter 19 of the present collection.

31 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 362.

32 At the Congress of the League I – as I have seen from the minutes of the Party Congress edited by the commission – mistakenly ascribed to this vote a result (16 for, 27 against), which relates to another question on the agenda, which had the very same meaning in essence [Martov's footnote].

33 The typesetting of the pamphlet is at this point quite eccentric: the sub-headings appear in the middle of sentences, evidently for ironical effect, giving the passage something of a 'yellow press' feel.

spot. In light of this it was necessary to introduce mutual co-option to the central institutions in order to secure for the Party the unity of their action. A new struggle arose around this question. It was necessary to act so that what happened with the OC could not be repeated in the run-up to the Third Congress. A consistent, honest (!!!) *Iskra* ministry needed to be created. On this point we were again beaten. The point about mutual co-option to the central institutions fell. From this moment on, the coalition (the 'Martovites' and the 'marsh') was already formed in its entirety.<sup>34</sup>

This seems to be clear. The 'principled question' is explained as a question about 'the creation of an honest *Iskra* ministry'. The fate of the Party depends upon this. In order that an 'honest' ministry be preserved up to the Third Congress, it is necessary to introduce 'mutual co-option'. Such are the principled foundations 'we' were in favour of, in the name of whom Lenin spoke, and to whom the 'soft' unwished-for 'honest ministry',<sup>35</sup> which comrade Lenin branded as apostates from *Iskra*-ism at the Congress of the League, were opposed.

But – everything flows, everything is changeable . . . And –

### *The Third Stage of the Question*

As for the arguments over the composition of the Council, co-option to Centres and so on, they remained arguments between individual delegates, between myself and Martov and others, and these arguments touched on what were by comparison, very minor details, which did not give rise to any definite alignment of *Iskra*-supporters (compare this to 'the coalition was already formed in its entirety', and *loc. cit.* further up: during the second half of the Congress a compact majority was also formed, but it only consisted of the 'Martovites' plus the 'marsh', plus the compact minority from *Rab. Del.* and the Bund), who with their votes put right the excesses of first one, then the other of us ('Letter').

This is too noble! It is as if comrade Lenin openly thanks those *Iskra*-ites who 'put right' his own 'excesses' with their votes. Only yesterday he damned these very same *Iskra*-ites for rejecting his proposal directed towards securing an 'honest ministry' with these same votes, votes which were aided, he alleges, by

34 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 81.

35 Not 'ministers' in either in the contemporary – bureaucratic – nor in the original sense of this word (minister-lackey) [Martov's footnote].

the Bundists and the marsh, and that were directed against a proposal which, as early as the third day, he had posed as a condition for the existence of the Party. And now 'excesses'! It is good, of course, that comrade Lenin has recognised the necessity of tearing up the canvas on which he drew a 'terrible' picture – 'the battle of the Russians with the Kabardians'<sup>36</sup> – with crude strokes, that battle in which he smashed 'the coalition of the Martovites' with the opportunists who were threatening to destroy the Party. It is bad that in the place of one Suzdal letter<sup>37</sup> in pictorial form, Lenin creates another of the very same school. There is no more battle, no 'compact Majority' of opportunist *Iskra*-ites and opportunists recognising *Iskra* (the same as the marsh). We have a united Party which puts right the 'excesses' of people who are inclined towards excesses with its votes; there are no 'important questions of principle' in the entire period following §1 of the rules, only a question about unimportant 'details'. And against this idyllic background, two types of figure stand out – the only 'shades' in our Party. On the one hand, 'Lenins' radiant in their veneration for the will of the Party, who let comrades 'put right' their 'excesses', wishing to live and let others live on condition that they 'do not alter the Centres' (after one basic alteration), disciplined people of Party duty; on the other hand, 'misbegotten redheads' who 'disorganise' the Party thanks to 'alterations' lacking any political meaning, people not constituting any type of 'compact group' on any question apart from that of the election of some X or other; people who 'simply whitewash the position of the Minority and its methods of struggle for changing the personal composition of the Centres', a struggle which 'it led and which alone provoked a divergence among us, in the full sense of the word'.<sup>38</sup>

The matter is clear: when it is necessary to justify one's personal 'struggle for the personal composition of the Centres', then we point to the profound importance of the question of co-option and declare our struggle to be a struggle with a 'compact Majority' which is wallowing in opportunism. When it is necessary to cast slurs on the struggle of opponents, we find that no division into 'hard' and 'soft' on question about organisational Centres can be discovered and that it was all thought up for the purposes of a 'whitewash'. Comrade Lenin firmly wants to have name days both on St. Anthony's and St. Onuphrius's Day.<sup>39</sup>

36 This would be an episode in the Russo-Circassian wars of 1763–1864 – part of the prolonged colonisation of the Caucasus by Russia.

37 The reference here is not clear to the translator. Suzdal is famous for its churches, monasteries and icons.

38 See Appendix 1.

39 On two consecutive days: 12 (Onuphrius) and 13 June (Anthony).



'We diverged on the question of how to conduct centralism and over the character of centralism' says the Minority, and comrade Lenin angrily replies: not true, we separated only on the question of the personal composition of the Centres. So, does comrade Lenin deny that the struggle over the content of the Centres at the Congress had for him, and for us, a principled significance? Let us now see how the opinion of Lenin has changed on this question.

### *At the Party Congress*

The old Editorial Board of *Iskra* has not been confirmed. Martov announces:

What is taking place here is the last act of a struggle which had been taking place during the course of the second half of the Congress. It is a secret to nobody that this reform is not about 'work rate', but about a struggle for influence over the Central Committee. The majority of the Editorial Board indicated that it did not want to turn the CC into an instrument of the Editorial Board. That is why it became necessary to reduce the number of members of the Editorial Board. . . . Together with the majority of the old Editorial Board, I thought that Congress would put an end to the 'state of siege' within the Party and would introduce a normal regime. In reality, the state of siege, with exceptional laws against definite groups and individuals, has been continued and even intensified. Only in the composition of the former Editorial Board can we guarantee that the rights granted to the Editorial Board by the rules do not serve to damage the Party.<sup>40</sup>

Comrade Lenin immediately answered:

I do not intend to touch on . . . the assertions of the same Martov about the 'political significance' of the step we have taken in not approving the old Editorial Board. On the contrary, I fully and unconditionally agree with comrade Martov that this step has a great political significance – just not the one which Martov ascribes to it. He said that this is an act of struggle for influence over the CC in Russia. I will go further than Martov. The struggle for influence has up to now been the entire activity of *Iskra* as a private group, but now we are already talking about a great, organisationally strengthened influence and not just about a struggle for it. To what degree we have a profound political divergence with Martov is evident from the fact that he accuses me of wanting to influence the Central Committee whilst I place myself at the service of whatever has aimed and

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40 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 432.

which continues to aim to strengthen this influence by organisational means. It turns out that we are speaking in different languages. What was the purpose of all our work, all our efforts if the culmination of them was that same old struggle for influence and not the complete acquisition and consolidation of influence? Yes, comrade Martov is entirely right: the step we have taken is undoubtedly a great political step, which is evidenced by the selection of one of the tendencies in the further work of our Party which have now taken shape . . . In relation to the unstable and shaky situation we not only can, we must institute a 'state of siege', and the whole of our Party rules, the whole of our centralism, from now on approved by Congress, is nothing other than a state of siege for those many sources of political vagueness. Against this vagueness we need special, and even exceptional laws, and the step taken by Congress correctly nominated the political tendency which had created a firm basis for such laws and such measures.<sup>41</sup>

This means that 'two tendencies took shape' at the Congress, that one of them, represented by Lenin, fought 'for the organised strengthening of the influence' of the Editorial Board of the CO over the CC and in this question 'profoundly differed politically' with 'comrade Martov', so profoundly that it turned out 'that we were speaking in different languages'.

The scheme described here unambiguously states: we differed on the question of the mutual relations between the Editorial Board and the Central Committee, and this difference led us to a split on the question of the composition of these institutions.

#### *At the Congress of the League*<sup>42</sup>

Having told us, as we saw above, how arguments about the rules (about mutual co-option) could be reduced to the question of 'creating a consistent, honest *Iskra* ministry' and how in these arguments he was 'beaten by a coalition', Lenin continues:

From this moment the coalition was formed entirely and, under the threat of defeat, we were obliged to load our guns with double shots. The Bund and *Rabochee Delo* remained (!! ) and with their votes were deciding the fate of the Congress. Thus an on-going, desperate struggle emerged.<sup>43</sup>

41 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 434–5.

42 The Congress in question is the Second Congress of the League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democrats Abroad, which took place on 26–31 October 1903 N.S.

43 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 81 ('The Second Congress of the League Abroad').

Having told us about the attempts to reach agreement among the *Iskra*-ites, the orator continues:

After the *Iskra*-ites split, we had to gather together all those holding the same views and began a fiery agitation. The unexpected exit of the Bund immediately changed the entire situation. Following its exit, a compact majority and minority was once again formed. We proved to be in the majority and put in the CC whoever we wanted.<sup>44</sup>

Here the link between the principled question of the mutual relations between the CC and CO and the 'electoral struggle' is clear. With the help, supposedly, of the Bund, the 'Martovites' managed to spoil the rules to such a degree that the wished-for guarantee of an 'honest *Iskra* ministry' does not show up in them. It is necessary to take advantage of the exit of the Bund in order, by means of elections, to attain that which could not be attained by numerous §§ of the rules. Or, using Lenin's expressions, the Minority tries to 'alter the composition of the Centres' (the actual 'Centres' at the moment of the Congress) in order to then 'overturn' the already-taken decisions of the Congress. Having become a majority, the previously beaten minority attained its goals.

This raises the stones on which the 'state of siege' fortress will be founded.

Martov's assertion about the 'state of siege' created by the Majority stands in scandalous contradiction to the real needs of the Party. In order to carry out work more successfully it was necessary to remove the obstructive elements and put them in a position in which they could not damage the Party<sup>45</sup>... That is why it was necessary to establish complete unity between the central institutions.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 82.

45 To what degree work was 'more successful' is clear from the following acknowledgement: the Minority 'for whole months... has taken up *so much of the energy* of the CC with its squabbles' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 136). But, of course, only the insidiousness of the Minority is responsible for this result of a policy which set the goal of working 'more successfully' and not the unwise creators of this policy. Does comrade Lenin acknowledge that, even from his point of view, a 'mistake' entered into his reckoning? By his very own admission it turns out that, pursuing the goal of putting 'obstructive elements' in a position where they would not be able to 'damage the Party', he achieved his goal with such means as led to the formation of new elements who 'obstructed' (not Party work, of course) perhaps more fundamentally (from the point of view of Lenin) than the first set of opponents were capable of doing? The fact alone of an indubitable mistake in the calculation should have forced any serious political figure to 'revise' his 'plan' [Martov's footnote].

46 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 83.

Here comrade Lenin, once more with praiseworthy openness, speaks about a 'state of siege': the establishment of 'complete unity between Centres' with the help of the mechanical removal of 'obstructive elements' from it. The reader knows who the latter are. First and foremost we have the Organising Committee and the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group – a group of professional revolutionaries that were influential in the Party prior to the Congress. After them, for refusing to take part in this crime, comes a third such group – the former *Iskra* organisation, in the form of a good half of it, the only émigré literary group (*Iskra*) and the only émigré organisation of the Party – the League.

But a false note creeps into even this true exposition. It is characteristic that, in speaking about his victory in the elections to the CC, comrade Lenin already passes over a significant 'political step' in silence – the alteration of the Editorial Board. He not only fails to link it to the struggle at the time of the working-out of the rules but even announces: 'it was a huge indiscretion (listen!) on the part of Martov to introduce the question of the confirmation of the whole six of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* to Congress when he knew that I would insist on the election of the Editorial Board'.<sup>47</sup> For 'this meant reducing the question of the election of the Editorial Board to an expression of distrust in separate individuals from the Editorial Board'.

This is said by somebody who subsequently exclaimed with youthful fervour: 'It is time... to put forward decisive slogans: more light, let the Party know everything, let everything, absolutely everything be attainable to it for the evaluation of each and every disagreement... Thus, and only thus will we allow the entire masses to know their leaders and to put each of them on their appropriate shelf'.<sup>48</sup>

That will be tomorrow, but for the present, not only the 'masses' but also the leadership of them – the delegates at the Congress – should not know 'everything' in order to determine 'places on the shelf'. To raise before them the corresponding question – that is to commit a huge indiscretion.

### *After Six Weeks*

"We differed on the question of the organisation of the Centres", says the author of the article, "Our Congress", "on the question of the relations of the CO to the CC"... Indeed? Did we not differ over the question of personal composition? You very well know, comrades, that things were precisely thus'.<sup>49</sup> 'The arguments over the content of the Council, over co-option to the

47 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 82.

48 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 116–17. This is in the earlier letter to *Iskra* replying to Plekhanov's 'What is Not to Be Done'.

49 See Appendix 1 for the source of all the citations in this paragraph.

Centres and so on remained arguments between separate delegates... these arguments touched on relatively partial details'. 'It goes without saying that such trifles constituted a principled disagreement (on the question of the composition of the Council – LM) no more than the notorious bureaucratic formalism'. The words of Parvus about the tendency to 'command' the workers' movement from 'Geneva' demonstrates only the 'goodness' of Parvus, who is tempted by the malicious 'underground', and when Parvus reads the minutes of both Congresses, he 'will be convinced that it is easy to become ridiculous if one take for real coinage every kind of *Parteiklatsch*'... 'The non-existent system of bureaucratism, formalism, autocracy, mechanism and so forth'. 'Only one principled disagreement on organisational questions is known to me and one alone – the one which was expressed in the debates on §1 of the rules'. Conversations about 'the strengthening of influence' of the Editorial Board over the CC with the aim of instituting a 'state of siege' is *parteiklatsch* (gossip!). Speeches about 'the removal of obstructive elements' ('mechanism' too) are *parteiklatsch*, as is the speech at the Party Congress of Lenin's right hand, comrade Pavlovich, when he spoke about the organisation of the Council.<sup>50</sup> In truth, comrade Lenin displays delightful audacity when he directs 'the good Parvus' to the minutes. Comrade Lenin wants to imitate Alexander Mikhailov<sup>51</sup> who, when escaping from the police, distracted the attention of the crowd with the cry of 'stop, thief!' But it seems that members of our Party are wiser than St. Petersburg sleuths and, having chased off in the direction indicated by comrade Lenin, nonetheless come back with speeches about mutual co-option, about the strengthening of influence and about the state of siege.

It goes without saying that, in the third stage, the question has 'ripened' to such a degree that Lenin does not say even a word about the non-confirmation of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*.

If, at the end of the Party Congress, we and Lenin proved to be 'speaking in different languages', to use the apt formulation of the latter, then this diversity of languages was subjected to further development: the comrade Lenin of the Party Congress and the comrade Lenin who authored the 'Letter to the Editors

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50 Pavlovich: 'apart from that, found it necessary to give preponderance to the CO over the CC (in the Council) in view of the stability of the former, therefore he proposed that Congress elect three from the CO and two from the CC'. (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 344) [Martov's footnote].

51 Alexander Dmitrievich Mikhailov (1855–84) was a member of the Executive Committee of 'People's Will'. He was given a life sentence in 1882 and died from illness in the Peter-Paul fortress.

of *Iskra*' also speak in different languages and also do not understand each other. This juxtaposition can embarrass comrades and lead them to gloomy conclusions. The 'freedom of languages' that is forgiveable in a journalist of the bourgeois press is indecent in a Social-Democratic publicist, they will think. Comrades, do not rush to formulate an expression of moral indignation that would stop the work of thought that has started in your head. 'Don't laugh, don't cry, but understand!'<sup>52</sup>

Understanding the polyglotism of comrade Lenin requires an understanding of his entire political position.

'A principled question' – an important principled struggle for the dominance of the CO over the CC – was the formula of vulgarised centralism at a given moment. Actually, the inevitable premise of this formula was: the CO is the personification of the 'state of siege' regime. And so long as comrade Lenin recognised that he was governor-general of this regime, he directly and honestly spoke about the 'political step' taken by him as the last act 'of the strengthening of influence' on the part of the Editorial Board over the Party through the Central Committee. But this actual premise collapsed on account of the uprising of half the Party, which had already started at the Party Congress. The very first serious battle at the Congress of the League dislodged the 'state of siege' from the main stronghold which comrade Lenin had set up. Comrade Lenin, *avec les armes et les bagages*,<sup>53</sup> moves to another stronghold – the CC – and selects it as a centre for that very same policy on the banner of which no longer appears the dominance of an organ of 'ideological leadership' (the newspaper) but the dominance of ideological leaders (definite people). The essence remained the same as before, but before this essence was realised and expressed with full frankness, the slogans of the day had to be changed. Yesterday – the hegemony of the CO over the CC; today, 'the harmonious work of all under the leadership of the CC' (not a word about the notorious 'ideological leadership'. So much for Lenin's rules!). Yesterday, the above cited words of Pavlovich; today 'enough of our émigré *Literatengezänk*'.<sup>54</sup> The 'language of the speech' changes but the language of feeling remains the same. But this evolution itself demonstrates that something here is wrong, that we are heading towards a decomposition of the present system. A tendency which is climbing in the world, which is being strengthened by the development of the class movement, cannot actually lead somebody into such a labyrinth of contradictions, it does not know such unprincipled changes of slogans. Its language is

52 These words are attributed to the rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–77).

53 'Lock, stock and barrel' (French).

54 'Literary squabbles' (German).

'let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no'<sup>55</sup> in relation to the categorical character and directness of principled declarations.

We will now see how the different stages of this decomposition of the idea of the 'state of siege' appear in separate resolutions and declarations of individual comrades who were tempted by the idea. We will see the whole gamut, from a demand for the tutelage of the CO over the CC to the demand that the Party be placed under the tutelage of N Lenin: from the 'hard *Iskra*-ites' to Schweitzerism by way of 'centralised bureaucracy'.

These heterogeneous phenomena, which contradict one another and which can rapidly lead a trend in thought to decay, cannot but produce a strong disharmony when they are heard together, and we have every right to say that all the 'Leninists' already speak in 'different languages'. That which we have revealed in comrade Lenin over a period of several months can at the same time be observed throughout the entire rule (in people's minds) of his regime. A genuine confusion of languages has taken place. It sets in wherever Babylonian Towers are destroyed.<sup>56</sup>

### III 'The Discontented Minority go over to a Boycott'

In the name of the 'state of siege', the old Editorial Board of *Iskra* was abolished and a specially picked CC was selected from comrades who, to use the French expression, were recognised as *ministrables* from the point of view of an 'honest *Iskra* ministry'.

The Minority, which made up half the delegates towards the end of the Congress but which was assembled with the help of those possessing only a consultative vote,<sup>57</sup> was presented with a task: how to act so as to prevent

55 Matthew 5:37 'Let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no: any more than this is the devil's work'.

56 This refers to the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. According to Genesis ch. 11 vv. 1–9, the generations following Noah spoke a single language, but this came to an end when they tried to build a tower that reached up to heaven at Babel. God frustrated their plans, sowing confusion among them by making them speak different languages. Traditional exegesis presents this act as a punishment for the Babylonians' arrogance in wanting to be God's equal.

57 Fourteen individuals attended the Second Congress of the RSDLP with the right to speak in debates but not to cast decisive votes, owing to the fact that they were considered experienced Social-Democratic activists, but had not been chosen to represent specific organisations within the Party. Many of these were members of *Iskra*: Krupskaya; the three 'rejected' editors, Zasulich, Potresov and Axelrod; Koltsov from the League



the full and consistent realisation of that 'state of siege' which the Congress, owing to an unfortunate confluence of circumstances, had entrusted the 'honest *Iskra* ministry' to realise and which – we were convinced of this – would bring about, in the last analysis, the abolition of the Party.

Even at the Congress itself we announced that we would not argue about the legality of Congress's decisions and that we would not go down the road of splits. We would act on the public opinion of the Party, in order to convince it of the disorganising character of the practice of the 'state of siege'. Lenin 'himself' would have to give into this opinion. Therefore: agitation in Party organisations and in the press on the basis of questions put forward at the Congress which had divided the 'compact Majority' of the Party.

But, of course, the artificial suppression of all forms of opposition, all forms of agitation striving to change this policy, cannot but be included in the practices of the 'state of siege'. Given the centralised character of the Party organisation, given the considerable powers that the 'Centres' were endowed with, this cannot but mean the systematic suppression from above of all elements displaying independence and an 'Opposition' mood. The propaganda of genuinely revolutionary centralism and criticism of the policy of 'the state of siege' would consequently lead to a chronic conflict between the central institutions and the various sections of the Party. This is guaranteed to us not so much by the composition of the CC so much as by the conditions under which its elections took place and the mandate which it received from comrade Lenin, who formulated the mission of the new power in his celebrated speech about 'the state of siege'. Before the CC elected at Congress demonstrated its intention to be freed from this mandate,<sup>58</sup> which was directed against the Minority, the latter had every justification for feeling distrustful towards this institution. The words spoken by comrade Lenin at the Congress of the League, which took the form of a summary of the 'state of siege' policy, shows quite how far it was right in its suppositions.

'In order to do work more successfully, it was necessary to remove the obstructive elements and put them in a position from which they would not be able to damage the Party; only thus will we succeed in working fruitfully at the next Congress. That is why it was necessary to establish full unity between

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Abroad and Noskov, who was subsequently elected to the Central Committee. Non-voting delegates were also invited from the Organising Committee, the Bund and the Polish Social Democrats.

58 This refers to the perceived emergence of a compromising tendency in the Central Committee, especially around the figure of Krzhizhanovskii towards the end of November 1903.

the central Party institutions'.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, an *a priori* establishment in the Party organisation of a division into 'well-intentioned' and not well-intentioned (*alias* obstructive) for whom, as Lenin announces with praiseworthy candour, a special 'position' of members without full rights is created in the Party, a situation of 'being bullied', to use the words of one 'underground' document. These eternally bullied members should be 'placed in such a situation' in which 'we will succeed in working fruitfully'. Further up it is written: 'the general impression of the Congress was that a struggle with intrigue had taken place. We were made incapable of work'.<sup>60</sup> And so, for work to be successful, it was necessary to ensure that at the next Congress the 'bullied' would not be represented in the capacity of a political force. For precisely this reason they should be 'placed' in the corresponding 'position' (more or less close to lying down).<sup>61</sup> Anticipating all the delights of this position, realising all the corruption in this construction of the Party on the basis of systematic mechanical suppression of any section of the Party, suppression not with moral or political authority, suppression not by force of public opinion, not as a result of the superior carrying out of work, but exclusively 'according to the rules' of force – realising this corruption, members of the Minority of the Congress and the comrades acting in solidarity with them had to set themselves the task of obtaining those changes in the composition of the central institutions, changes which, for the great majority of the Party, for those capable of being 'bullied' and above all for those who found themselves in this category, would signify a guarantee against the worst methods of this 'bureaucratic' suppression of their revolutionary struggle.

And, along with this, members of the Minority had to note to themselves that type of work in the Party according to which they would not end up in a false and ambiguous position of being an unwilling vehicle for the 'state of siege' system that was proclaimed by comrade Lenin, a position simply unavoidable for those who agreed to work in the immediate vicinity of the

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59 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 83.

60 Ibid.

61 Another place in Lenin's article (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 82) no less clearly sets in relief this peculiar notion of relations within the Party. Having spoken about the readiness of one comrade from *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* to appear in the list of candidates for the CC which the Minority compiled, and about his refusal to enter Lenin's or the Majority's 'ministry', comrade Lenin continues literally: '*Iuzh. Rab.*, an extraneous element – decided the question of the CC'. Thus in the Party, as it is conceived by comrade Lenin, there will be members who are relied on *a priori* 'to decide the question of the CC', that is, to take part in the determination of its content, and also those who are deliberately 'not relied on', that is, 'bullies' and 'bullied'. We respectfully ask comrade Lenin to directly answer the question: to whom was *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* 'extraneous' at the Congress? [Martov's footnote].

central institutions of the Party. It was impossible to obtain clear relations between the two parts of the Party into which it had been decided in principle to divide it, in the name of the 'state of siege', other than by the Minority excluding itself from such work; otherwise, it was impossible, especially for *Iskra*-ites, with the inevitable collapse of that type of centralism, to save the centralist idea itself and their own political reputation. That is why, even at the Congress, Koltsov<sup>62</sup> and I turned down the offer of a place on the Editorial Board whilst comrade Popov<sup>63</sup> – the above-mentioned delegate of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* – turned down a place on the CC. Only such changes in the composition of the Centres which would have signified a principled break with the system of the 'state of siege' would have put an end to this 'boycott'.

We see from this how conditionally we need to understand a word that has become a popular weapon in the struggle against the Minority. Nor did the latter think of a protracted boycott, of a refusal to recognise the institutions chosen by Congress or to have any relations with them. On the contrary, the Minority fulfilled all their responsibilities in relation to the central institutions of the Party, as they were dictated by the rules, without the least hesitation.<sup>64</sup> The absolute obligation to work in the role of an agent of the CC or as a member of the CO does not and cannot lie with a single member of the Party. The members of the CC themselves, to whom the Minority directly and honestly announced its intentions straight after the Congress, should have recognised this. Members of the CC should have answered negatively when asked whether the principled rejection of definite forms of work was recognised by

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62 Initially nominated for a post on the Editorial Board at the Second RSDLP Congress, Koltsov received just a few votes, but was nonetheless offered the job when Martov refused to accept it (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 436).

63 Vladimir Rozanov.

64 In the afterword to the only just published 'Letter to a Comrade', Lenin makes bold to speak about 'a refusal to do positive work' on the part of the Minority (Lenin, 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 136). This boldness is, in truth, repulsive! The refusal to carry out definite tasks, to work in definite institutions of the Party, 'is generalised' into 'the refusal to do positive work' in order to create a new bugbear for catching simpletons. I admit that I did not expect such an attack from Lenin, even after everything he has done in recent times. For me it goes without saying that the Don, Kiev and allied 'Committees of the Opposition' were occupied with positive work, no less than the Orlov, Saratov and allied Committees. As regards '*émigré littérateurs*', such as me personally, I would wish on the leaders of the Majority the same right to laugh during conversations about unwillingness to work as I have acquired. The framework of our Party – despite the existence of a 'super-centre' – still proved to be broad enough after the Congress for me and my comrades to do very positive work during that period of time when we were required to not write for *Iskra*, and the committees, who did not fear the anger of the 'super-centre', knew how to use our literary forces which were proving to be 'unutilised' [Martov's footnote].

them as 'illegal', and should have promised, for their part, an entirely 'neutral' attitude to the 'boycotters' (in the sense mentioned earlier) in the Party. Does it not seem that this neutral position, if the CC had managed to maintain it to the end, would have been the most reasonable in those circumstances: all members of the Party, both the 'boycotting' and the non-boycotting, would have obtained the full possibility of familiarising themselves with the state of affairs and to decide how deserved was the mistrust towards the CC on the part of the Minority, which dictated the notorious boycott? With these tactics, the outcome for the CC, which would of course not remain idle and would itself try to win for itself the trust of the broadest circles of the Party through positive work, could be one of two things. Either the Opposition would 'stew in its own juice' if it is, as Lenin currently asserts, made up of nothing more than 'émigré circles' or 'circles of generals', who do not get a response in the broad circles of comrades. In this case they would be harmless in every sense of the word, and the process of the unification of Party work would be easily completed, not only in spite of its opposition, but also without its assistance. Or, it would turn out that the 'Opposition' represented a force within the Party, and then the CC would clearly see that agreement with it represented a matter of political convenience and that it was obliged to enter into such an agreement in order to put right the always possible and entirely forgivable mistake of Congress. For the Party centre is not merely elected to 'strengthen' without end that which was done at Congress, but to develop it further. The Congress carried out the important task of uniting the Party and to risk the general results achieved for the sake of not 'reconsidering' partial decisions which have proved incompatible with these general results – this would amount to not seeing the wood for the trees, it would reveal a short-sightedness that is, in truth, criminal.

We do not have enough information to judge the mood of the CC in this first period after the Congress and to decide what sort of 'tactical plan' is being outlined by it, as a collective, regarding the current state of affairs.<sup>65</sup> But we have sufficient proof of the fact that for N Lenin, the question from the very beginning stood thus: either 'complete submission' (on the part of the 'Opposition') or a split. And we are also reliably informed that the other member of the Editorial Board – Plekhanov – was from the very beginning convinced, and convinced other people that 'direct' tactics would lead to no good. The facts show that unfortunately the CC followed the road based on the opinions of Lenin.

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65 I cordially advised a member of the CC known to me personally to act in the manner indicated above straight after Congress [Martov's footnote].

The member of the CC who was sent abroad tried to 'establish agreement' between the two parts of the old Editorial Board of *Iskra*.<sup>66</sup> He did not succeed in doing this, given that Lenin did not want to hear about the restoration of the old Editorial Board<sup>67</sup> and as the comrade from the CC was not able to bring to the Minority any convincing argument against such a restoration from the point of view of the interests of the Party (the poor devil would not have been able to find them with the best will in the world). Axelrod, Starover, Zasulich and Martov declared to him that, not considering it possible for them to work on *Iskra*, they wished to form a pamphlet-publishing group and asked for permission from the CC (is this not very close to a boycott of the CC?)<sup>68</sup> Over the course of a very long time, no reply to this suggestion was received, whilst Lenin and co. categorically declared *orbi et urbi*<sup>69</sup> that such permission was not granted to the individuals mentioned, either to members of the Majority or to members of the Minority.<sup>70</sup> The charming perspective was carefully drawn before us of being 'coerced' into writing in a definite place in order to avoid 'defaulting' on our duty to the Party. Comrade Lenin, as is obvious, genuinely thought that the merits of publications edited by him, would gain from the attachment of writers to it, and the Minority, like the Don Juan of Alexei Tolstoi, had to argue in a serious manner:

Don't interfere in anyone's conscience using force  
And don't drive anyone to heaven with a club<sup>71</sup>

We will see below that the notorious 'permission' was 'given' only when it proved to be practically unnecessary.

66 According to Krupskaya, this individual was Lengnik (Krupskaya 1930, p. 109).

67 Contrary to Martov's assertion, Lenin claims to have agreed to this restoration even before the end of the Second Congress: see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 347; Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, pp. 213–14.

68 And how close is this to unwillingness to do 'positive work'? Do we not have the right, on the contrary, to consider that they deliberately and systematically pushed us away from such work when they demanded that we work precisely where we declared that we were unable to work? [Martov's footnote].

69 'To the City and to the World' (Latin): from the papal blessing given at Easter and Christmas in Rome.

70 There are no statements in either Lenin 1960–79 or Lenin *et al.* 1924–85 to this effect. This could be because it was the responsibility of the Central Committee and not Lenin to grant and revoke such permission.

71 Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoi (1817–75), second cousin to the more famous Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi (1828–1910), published the dramatic poem *Don Juan* in 1861.

Meanwhile, the southern committees, having heard the reports of their delegates about the Congress (and also several reports of agents of the CC) adopted the following resolutions, which it sent to the CC and the CO. We cite them in full.

Having heard the report of the delegate, the *Committee of the Social-Democratic Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers* adopted the following resolution:

Noting:

- 1) that a sharp disagreement on organisational questions and that a split in the Editorial Board of *Iskra* not only fails to further the unity and strengthening of the Party, but destroys everything that was done previously by *Iskra* and the Organising Committee;
- 2) that the atmosphere of political intrigue and mistrust created at that time threatens the unity and integrity of the Party;
- 3) that, thanks to all that has already happened, the central institutions are condemned to an undermining of their Party authority, the CSDUMMW requests that these central institutions take all measures to settle the disagreement that has taken place and to re-establish, by means of the co-option of the eliminated members of the Editorial Board, the latter's previous composition.

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Noting:

- 1) that the main task of the Second Congress of our Party was the unification of the Russian Social Democracy into one tightly consolidated organisation;
- 2) that the Second Congress, in consequence of the divergence between the majority and the minority of the Congress and the split in the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, dealt a hard blow to the cause of unification, and noting that it could return the Party to that time when it had neither that single, firmly agreeing spiritual core around which the Party organisation was formed, nor that unity of direction which there was before the Congress, nor that faith in the immediate future of the Party which is necessary for the fruitful work of its organisation;

- 3) Not entering into a review of the question of who to blame for what has happened and considering only the deplorable results, regarding which one cannot but express regrets, the *Kiev Committee*, whilst recognising all the resolutions of the Congress, draws the attention of the CC and the CO to the fact that such a position will have a fatal effect on the Party and proposes that they take appropriate measures to settle the disagreement which has emerged in the Editorial Board of *Iskra*.

KCRSDLP

ps The present resolution was carried by seven votes to one. Of the seven voting in favour, one individual, along with the one who voted against (two people in total) did so in view of a special opinion expressed in the following addition to the resolution: 'Bearing in mind the fact that all the resolutions of the Congress were legally constituted, including the election of the Editorial Board, we request that Martov joins the Editorial Board'.

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The *Kharkov Committee*, having heard the report of its delegates on the Second Congress of the RSDLP and also the communication of an especially dispatched representative from the CC and from one of the members of the CC, adopted the following resolution:

Over the course of the last year, a whole list of declarations from various committees has been printed in *Iskra*, in which several of the committees announced either their recognition of *Iskra* as the Party organ or their wish to see it so. The Kharkov Committee, it is true, did not make such a declaration, but it declared its full solidarity with the *Iskra* tendency and declared that it shared its understanding of programmatic, tactical and organisational questions: in other words, if not formally, then in essence, it declared that *Iskra* had the right to be the leading organ. Recognising *Iskra's* right, the Kharkov Committee, probably like many others who made a similar declaration, did not of course merely refer to a five-letter title when they mentioned *Iskra*, but a definite Editorial Board, a group of individuals, tightly-held together by the unity of its opinions, individuals who had already proven their ability to guide the ideological life of the Party. In this group it did not



distinguish Ivanov from Petrov, it saw just one whole, amalgamated like steel. The insertion into the agenda of two points not entirely compatible with one another seemed all the more strange to the members of the Kharkov Committee: firstly, the recognition of one of the existing organs as the leading organ, secondly, the election of a new or the confirmation of the old Editorial Board of the Party organ.

How the authors of the agenda understood the link between these two points remained unexplained up to the end of the Congress. The only meaning the second point could have had was that the Congress wanted to give some instructions to the Editorial Board, but that should have come with the *proviso* that the meaning of the first point should not be destroyed. Ignoring this contradiction, Congress resolved to select – and selected – two members of the new Editorial Board, granting it the right to co-opt the rest of its personnel. The majority of the old Editorial Board (four people) were not co-opted. Thus, having first recognised *Iskra* as the leading organ of the Party in the form of its former Editorial Board and then having elected a new Editorial Board of the leading organ, Congress took a leap into the unknown. Nothing guaranteed that the new composition of the Editorial Board would give us the same *Iskra*, the talent and breadth of opinion of which we had come to value. Clearly, that was how it was viewed by a significant number of the comrades – 20 out of 44 – present at the Congress after the only possible outcome, the confirmation of the old Editorial Board, was rejected. The comrades who abstained from voting considered it impossible for them to participate in the election of an Editorial Board contrary to the sense of their own previous resolution. The very fact of throwing overboard a significant part of the old Editorial Board, which seems an absurdity to all outward appearances, remains in essence inexplicable to us. The old Editorial Board was not co-opted and there may have been two reasons for this: either this part of the Editorial Board proved unfit and untalented, or a disagreement between them and the members remaining in the Editorial Board had emerged. The absurdity of the first suggestion becomes obvious if we remember that these four are Zasulich, Martov, Starover and Axelrod and if we add that our revolutionary press is so poor in talents. All that remains is to admit that there was a disagreement. Once again there are two possible reasons for a disagreement: over essential questions or over secondary ones. It is clear that there could not have been disagreements on basic

questions – such disagreements would not have required a clearly external cause in the form of the Congress for them to be discovered, work would not have been possible and they would have broken out much earlier, and in reality such disagreements were not revealed even at the Congress. Thus we should admit that four talented, valued and respected individuals had to go only because they did not agree in particular on questions which today are brought forward by circumstance and which tomorrow are swept away without a trace. Is the breaking up of a well-proportioned, unified ideological core about which so much has been said really a lesser evil than the tenure in one organisation of several people differing, shall we say, on the question of one or the other institution of the Party? Unity of opinions and complete uniformity of them are two separate things.

The practical decision taken by the Congress on the question of centralism provokes no less bewilderment. It turns out that the central institutions of the Party have been broken up into two parts, one of which was deprived of the right to ideological leadership and was wholly subordinated in this sphere to the Editorial Board of the Central Organ and, in the case of a conflict with the latter, to the Party Council – in reality, once again to the Editorial Board. But whoever seriously contemplates the notion of revolutionary work and of ideological leadership, understands that to place the leadership of the ideological life of the Party into somebody's hands means to give up the leadership of all Party work, for how can one remove the element of ideology from revolutionary activity (if purely technical functions are excluded)? In this way the role of the CC is reduced in practice to the role of a bailiff of the Editorial Board; consequently, the latter consolidates its influence on the life of the Party not through its authority, not by force of conviction but by purely police methods, and it does not suppose a reverse effect of the CC on it to be possible. We did not describe two sides heading for a clash and therefore requiring a permanent reconciliation chamber when we spoke of centralism. We imagined one central institution uniting two closely-fused groups in itself which separated literary work from all the rest only for the sake of practical convenience, and not because of the recognition of a distinction in principle between the two forms of activity, an ideological and practical group, an assumption which permits all sorts of clashes in the sphere of properly principled questions as soon as such clashes

involving the force of convictions, but not executive power, using the force of logic but not the force of a stick, are permitted.<sup>72</sup>

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Noting those abnormal conditions under which the elections to the CC and to the Editorial Board of the CO took place, and expressing extreme regret regarding the departure of many valuable forces in consequence of this, the *Don Committee* proposes that the CC and the CO co-opt these forces which are so valuable to the Party.

Four Party organisations with various motivations, expressing a far from uniform attitude to separate questions, have adopted a series of analogous resolutions pointing at the very least to the abnormality of the state of affairs that has been created.

How do the Party Centres answer? How do they react to this 'request' (of the mine workers), the 'proposal' (of Kiev, Rostov) and the 'hope' (of the Kharkovites)? Did the CC immediately call a conference of these committees, inviting them to discuss the current state of affairs together and to work out a *modus vivendi* for the Party?

Oh no! It... merely announced to the Kiev comrades that their resolution (not publicised, but only 'brought to attention!') was 'tactless'.<sup>73</sup> This 'predicate' became known to southern comrades and caused them not a little amazement: they imagined that, in drawing the attention of the Central Committee to their opinions on general-Party matters, they were carrying out their Party duty. They naively thought that 'the boycotting of the Centres', which would consist in the non-communication to the Centres of the moods and opinions of the various detachments of the Party, would threaten both a thickening of the atmosphere of intrigue and real 'disorganisation'.

If this is how the Russian centre relates to a committees' 'petition', then what kind of answer would be dictated by the logic of the 'state of siege' to the émigré 'super-centre' – to comrade Lenin?

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72 This represents the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* position on the Second Congress and the character of the RSDLP's leading institutions. The resolution is not printed in full here, the remainder appearing at the end of the main text, before the appendices.

73 I mention this 'off-the-record' answer as the communication to the Kiev Committee was verified by us through an inquiry to a member of the Central Committee [Martov's footnote].

Here are the enquiries comrade Lenin<sup>74</sup> sent to the Don Committee and to the Mining and Metallurgical Union.

To the Don Committee the following enquiry was sent:

Comrades! We received your letter with the resolution. We would be much obliged if you told us the following: 1) whether you heard the reports of both the Minority and the Majority (one of your delegates, as you probably know, was on the side of the Majority) or only the Minority? 2) what you understand by the term 'departure'. Departure to where? Do you understand by this that somebody was removed from work, or that they removed themselves for some particular reason, and for what reason precisely? 3) what you mean by 'elections carried out under abnormal conditions' (for the 'good' Lenin, clearly the abstention of 20 delegates out of 44 represents 'normal conditions of election LM) 4) who, in your opinion, we should co-opt to the Central Committee and 5) who to the Editorial Board of the CO? (the 'good' Lenin still cannot guess who – LM)<sup>75</sup>

The enquiry to the Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers:

Comrades! We received your resolution and request that you answer the following questions. Please discuss them at a full meeting of all members of the committee (or send them to all comrades if they cannot be together) as an enquiry from the CO of the Party.

- 1) Did the committee hear a report from a representative of the Majority at the Congress of the Party?
- 2) Does the committee consider it normal to pass a resolution that evaluates the activity and decisions of Congress prior to the publication of the minutes and even prior to the committee asking the CC or members of the Majority about matters that are not clear to them?
- 3) How can these disagreements on organisational questions destroy all that was done earlier by *Iskra* and the OC? How is this destruction manifested? What precisely was destroyed? This is completely

74 The other editor, Plekhanov, was not involved in these enquiries.

75 This and the following letter (to the Mining and Metallurgical Union) appear in Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 181–3, where the source is given as the present pamphlet.

unclear to us and besides, if you wish to warn the CO against some kind of mistake, then your duty is to inform us what you think our mistake is. Set out the matter with full details and we will carefully discuss your opinion.

- 4) What exactly were the 'sharp disagreements on organisational questions'? We do not know. (We asked Martov and the former members of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* to set forth these disagreements in the pages of the publications edited by ourselves, but our request was not honoured).
- 5) How did the atmosphere of intrigue and mistrust manifest itself? Please speak more clearly. (If we didn't trust Martov, we wouldn't have invited him to work on *Iskra*.)
- 6) If there really are 'sharp disagreements on organisational questions' between ourselves and the former editors, then how on earth is it possible for us two to co-opt those four? You realise that this would make their shade the dominant one? When the Congress favoured ours? Thus you want the decision of the Congress to be overturned on the basis of a private agreement?
- 7) Do you consider it normal that those with Party responsibilities (the editors of the CO and the CC) should, under pain of a split or boycott, be forced into doing things which they do not believe serves the interests of the Party?
- 8) Do you consider it normal and permissible for members of the Party who are in the Minority to stand aloof from work in the CO, from supporting the CC and obeying it, from supporting the Party financially and so forth?

Especially noteworthy in these enquiries is the idea that 'passing a resolution that evaluates the activity and decisions of the Congress prior to the publication of the minutes' 'appears abnormal'. Further, we note that comrade Lenin allows for the existence of two 'shades of opinion' of some sort in organisational matters ('you realise that Congress favoured our shade?'). However, we will not dwell on the essence of the enquiry as the answer of the Mining and Metallurgical Union (see below) is sufficiently convincing.

Thus, the super-centre gave warning to the southern committees, who had adopted resolutions containing expressions of 'regret' concerning such facts as the abolition of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and the OC, that the 'evaluation' of the results of this work prior to the publication of the minutes was 'abnormal'. But at the very same time as it was sending out this enquiry (judging by

the date of the letter), this very same 'super-centre' (or its secretary)<sup>76</sup> wrote to the Tver Committee:<sup>77</sup>

We hoped for a long time that reconciliation with the Martovites would take place, that there would be attempts at negotiations, but from their side completely unacceptable conditions were presented. From the point at which the Minority 'declared war' – and this war was declared even at the Congress – the question of co-option took on a completely different meaning. Prior to Congress we resorted to voting (in the Editorial Board – LM) only in rare cases; usually whoever energetically stood up for their opinion prevailed (sic!). Congress completely changed the basis of the old half-dozen. Now, whoever had a majority behind them would prevail – Plekhanov and Lenin would in all cases of disagreement be in the Minority.<sup>78</sup> Since Martov declared that he would not enter the Editorial Board because he would always, in the case of disagreements, be left in the Minority, the Editorial Board proposed co-opting another person from the former Editorial Board, someone 'they' wanted, so that there would be equality in voting, but 'they' did not want this. Immediately after the Congress, the Editorial Board of the CO invited all the former members of the Editorial Board to write for *Iskra* and *Zaria* and they answered: 'we are not serfs'.<sup>79</sup> Subsequently, since he referred to a disagreement on organisational questions, the invitation was repeated with a request to set out their organisational opinions in the pages of *Iskra* and *Zaria* but there was another refusal, they wanted at all costs to set

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76 Presumably Krupskaya.

77 Tver was not independently represented at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, but probably came under the auspices of the Northern Union, which was.

78 Now I hope that all comrades will see how the matter stands: the explanations given to the Tver Committee, which are candid to the point of saintliness (note that the argument introduced here comes from somebody who does not recognise the presence of organisational disagreements. All the same this person fears that he is in the Minority!) I also draw attention to this argument: since at Congress 'the Minority declared war', 'the question of co-option took on an entirely different aspect'. But this very war was declared the moment the Editorial Board was split and this (as we learn from the speech of Lenin) was done in order to 'declare war' *en permamance* against this Minority. Try, if you will, to make out the logic of this explanation [Martov's footnote].

79 In this sense, indeed, Starover answered the naïve opinion expressed to him by Lenin that if we were in the Party, we were enrolled in the writers' department – pens in hand and off to the central Party newspaper! [Martov's footnote].

up their own special literary group [oh horror! – LM]. Both abroad and in Russia, the Minority tried with all its force to impede the work of the Centres and to discredit them in every way. In the south they managed to attain, by means of personal connections (?), resolutions from the Don Committee and the Mining-Metallurgical Committee, and also Kiev, in which they requested the co-option of the old Editorial Board, whilst Rostov neither more nor less than demanded<sup>80</sup> the co-option of all the forces who had left (where?). All this agitation provoked terrible demoralisation and naturally only made worse, rather than improved, the state of affairs. *It would be good if the committees, who have adopted the point of view of the Majority, sent counter-resolutions with expressions of trust in the central institutions and invitations to Martov to enter the Editorial Board* (our italics).

That which is wholesome for Tver kills Rostov. In the south it is 'abnormal' to adopt a resolution having not waited until the publication of the minutes, though having heard one's delegate; in the north it is 'normal' 'to send counter-resolutions with expressions of trust'. And all this is written over the course of three to four days! We see that the ability to speak 'in different languages' also produces the capacity to write 'in different hands'.

In the first instance, the Tver Committee answered in a restrained fashion: 'In view of the facts that, up to now, nobody from the CC has come to us and that we do not know the details about what has happened, we do not want to take a definite position on all that has taken place'. However, after several days, the Tver Committee informed the Editorial Board that a member of the CC had arrived and that the committee had adopted a resolution . . . in the spirit of the advice that has just been cited. Clearly, the Tver comrades were given the appropriate 'proposal' by the leadership and, as we can see, for several comrades, the 'proposal' amounts to 'nothing more or less than' a 'demand'.

But before we turn our attention to the Tver and other resolutions, we will finish this chapter with the answer of the Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers to comrade Lenin's inquiry.

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80 Underlined in the original, probably so as to draw attention to the fact that 'demands' does not, properly speaking, appear in the resolution of the Don Committee which 'neither more nor less than' 'proposes' [Martov's footnote].



*Reply of the Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers*

Comrades! You answered our resolution with a whole series of questions and express the wish that all our comrades be familiarised with them and that our answer be the answer of our entire collective. This is precisely the answer you receive in the following lines.

Though in your many points a poorly hidden polemical ardour shows itself all too clearly, as does a wish to compromise the Minority, you having cast upon them in passing the reproach that, owing to some inconsequential disagreement, they refused 'to support the Party' (in 8); nonetheless we will not leave without answering a single one of your points, taking all your misunderstandings at face value.

You are interested to know whether we heard a representative of the Majority and you expressed surprise that we consider it normal to adopt a resolution on Congress, not having seen the minutes. Just imagine, we consider it not only normal and possible to adopt a resolution, but even obligatory for us, and this is why. We want to be more than committeemen subordinated on the basis of some § by a certain institution of the Party, we want to be members of the Party for whom its fate is not a matter of indifference. From the report of our delegate, we were convinced (and trust in the report of our delegate we consider to be an entirely normal phenomenon) that a disagreement had taken place in the Party as a result of which a number of Party workers had to give up the work they had carried out earlier. And if the removal from work of these forces, who happen to be your former comrades on the Editorial Board, is in itself a very sad event, then it has an even greater moral significance. The split in the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, which for 20 years worked without the least disagreement, and in the *Iskra* group which everyone was accustomed to viewing as the model of solidarity, cannot but produce a painful impression on all who saw a Party leadership in these groups. We waited with impatience for Congress in the hope that it would put an end to all disagreements, to every kind of struggle within the Party, but it sowed new discord, which cannot but provoke struggles, disagreements, which is all the more sad because they have penetrated to the very centre of a tendency that has up to now been united.

Congress destroyed that ideological unity which, prior to Congress, seemed so full and firm within the *Iskra* group and the organisations affiliated to it. Such a state of affairs threatens, in our opinion, possibly mistakenly, but in any case sincerely, an extraordinarily difficult complication in the life of the Party and we consider it our duty to not close

our eyes to that which has passed but, on the contrary, to give ourselves a clear account of it and to assist the resolution of the crisis in the direction we consider desirable. This was not only our right but, we dare to think, our duty. True, we did not wait for the minutes of Congress, but don't be so naïve, comrades, and agree that we have a right to suggest what might easily happen: your printing press will be occupied with more pressing work and the minutes will show themselves in these distant parts only once our intervention in what has taken place loses all meaning.

True, we did not wait for a representative of the CC either (we repeat, we trusted our delegate) but now, having heard the CC, we can say that we have not changed our attitude to the report of our delegate, nor to what happened at the Congress.

The Party waited five years for a Congress and the most rose-tinted hopes, maybe too rose-tinted, were invested in that Congress. We all thought that the Congress would finally liquidate the period of 'handicraft methods' and would found a strong organisation that would heal all the wounds of the movement. We expected a CC that would really unite and lead all the organisations of the Party forward, setting out a new road for its work. The formation of a strong CC – this was, in our modest opinion, the final goal of the liquidation. You, together with the Majority, probably thought in the same way, but you placed such a task before the CC – the task of eradicating alien elements, a task which the CC, in carrying it out, could no longer remain the CC but would have to have been transformed into a CC of trusted agents of the Editorial Board, a CC which was intended to be its 'fist'. And you introduced into the rules a series of §§ which were to make the CC into an institution subordinated to the CO. We do not in the least deny the possibility of the CO influencing the matter of the correct leadership of the Party, but we think that the task of centralisation is not completed so long as a group of practical workers is not created in Russia which is not separated by state borders and which is sufficiently strong to be the leadership of the Party. And such a group cannot be developed from the CC, which is given the special task of 'supporting the state of siege' in the Party and in other respects is advised to direct its attention towards primarily technical enterprises. This is not written in the rules but Lenin, whose words we can consider as the programme of the Majority from which the CC clearly has no intention of retreating, spoke along these lines at Congress. We were not even opposed to broad powers for the CC, but we believe that if only it did not pursue the goals of a strengthened security apparatus or the state of

siege, it would not need the absolute right 'without appeal' to boss around the staff of whole committees in order to secure influence. But such a right became a positive danger in the hands of a CC which had the limited goals of supporting the state of siege. We termed this right 'without appeal', not forgetting the § according to which every member of the Party had the right to bring their opinion to the attention of the highest institution of the Party. This is, of course, not a right of appeal – it is not even the right to complain – but the right of the informer, if we are to use the legal term. We also consider any form of superintendence on the part of the Editorial Board over the personal composition of a committee to be as superfluous as the control of the CO over the CC and, given the existence of this same 'state of siege', consider this § to be positively harmful. Generally, we fear that the psychology of a state of siege will only lead to the function of distributing Party forces turning into the function of removing from office, something which is only corroborated by the incident with the Editorial Board.

Here we approached that moment in the work of Congress in which the consequences of intrigue become unmistakeably clear. You wanted us to dot the 'i's and we have granted you your wish. We give the name of intrigue to the actions of the Majority when it refused to confirm the previous Editorial Board, not having wished to give it a hearing and not having offered any reason that was in any way serious: another such act was the resolution of the Majority which produced elections to the CC by means of a secret ballot in which the lists were not announced, after which the whole Majority voted as one man: speeches about conspiratorial considerations on the part of the Majority were, of course, intrigue, and such methods could only bring about the atmosphere of mistrust we spoke about in the resolution. These very circumstances accompanying the elections deprived them of all that moral authority which is in general necessary to the higher institutions of the Party. If indeed you would further add to this the fact that the Majority was only a legal technicality, and that in fact that the majority was on the side of the Minority and that on the last day of Congress the legal-technical majority was no longer behind you, then you should not have been surprised that we proposed that you abandon your policy, not being embarrassed by the fact that the Majority had approved it. You, despite your exceptional energy, only just obtained this majority, and now you ask us how we can advise you to co-opt the entire personnel of the Editorial Board, 'which we want to make the ruling shade, when Congress spoke in favour of us'. Comrades! You are starting to resemble a fetish-worshipper, as you are bowing down

in front of an idol you have made yourselves. It remains for us to respond to that list of questions through which you want to accuse the Minority of various types of crime: the Minority is boycotting the CO and CC and is supposedly withholding financial support from the Party. The latter is clearly a slip of the pen: you probably wanted to say that several comrades from the Minority refused to send money to *Iskra* and sent it elsewhere, but from this to a refusal to financially support the Party in general is still very far. If indeed the Minority does not participate in the CO or the CC then it seems to us that the situation cannot be otherwise, after the Majority took care of them instead. As is clear from your questions, the Minority, by its refusal of work on the CO and in the CC, put these institutions in a difficult position and you are indignant with them because of this. We consider it entirely normal that people should only assist in the implementation of a policy they support and that they should fight against one they consider harmful. This is their right and no-one can reproach them when they fight with honest means.

**IV      ‘The Apogee of the Military Actions of the Opposition’  
           ‘Russian Committees Lead a Struggle against the Disorganising  
           Activity and Boycott of the Minority’<sup>81</sup>**

We said that ‘the petition of the Social-Democratic men of letters’ concerning their emancipation from the responsibility of writing for *Iskra* did not earn a reply on the part of the CC. But at the very same time – as we saw from the letter to the Tver Committee – the enserfed men of letters tenaciously remained in arrears as regards carrying out their ‘obligations’. Among shrewd people there was even the apprehension: what if they liberated themselves from their ‘indenture’ by such means as were used by the enserfed peasants in the good old days, by going over to the less ‘severe’ hand of another ‘master’? That is to say, what if they took part in the literary publications of any of the existing Party organisations? The logic of the ‘state of siege’ demanded that measures were taken in good time to put a stop to such an ‘evasion’ of the plans of the ‘super-centre’, for these plans stated: ‘In accordance with the spirit (!) of the rules, the entire publication of Party literature should be concentrated in the hands of the Central Committee, which has its own print-

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81      These words are taken from Lenin’s ‘Letter’: see Appendix 1.

ing press for this purpose'.<sup>82</sup> And given that the most immediate 'master' for Zasulich, Axelrod and others was the 'sole émigré organisation' – the League – 'which enjoys all the rights of the committees',<sup>83</sup> the outcome was clear: broadcast the position on the strengthening of security in the League. Or – to use the language of Lenin – 'readers (of the minutes of the League Congress) will see whether there was not something in the onslaught of the Opposition that provoked the Central Committee into exceptional measures'.<sup>84</sup> No state of siege has ever been introduced without it being 'provoked' by the objects of its application.

Comrade Lenin here depicts the entire matter as if the 'onslaught', which is obvious in the minutes, preceded the 'exceptional measures'. Comrade Lenin is so convinced of the improbability of this, that immediately after the words I have cited, he puts in parentheses 'as the CC itself expressed it when the change in the composition of the Editorial Board'<sup>85</sup> gave hope that peace could be established in the Party'. Clearly, this means that 'exceptional measures' were provoked by the absence of any 'hope for peace', by the fears of the centre and the super-centre<sup>86</sup> that the League would be turned into a nest of 'sedition'. This was fully confirmed by a whole chronology of 'military actions' which, according to Lenin, were carried out by the League against the Central Committee.

Suddenly, 'like a bolt from the blue', a circular from the CC shot down onto the heads of the members of the League from which, having expected a regular Congress of their organisation, they found out that the CC 'had begun working out' new rules for the League. Members of the League (the Majority) answered that they themselves intended to work out the rules for their own organisation, and the administration called a Congress of the League. The Congress started under auspicious circumstances: the letter of a member of the CC informed them that the attempt to write new rules for the League had been withdrawn. The League heard the delegate to the Party Congress and adopted a resolution:

82 *Congress of the League*, p. 108 (speech of comrade Litvinov) [Martov's footnote].

83 These are excerpts from paragraph 13 of the RSDLP constitution (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 13).

84 See Appendix 1.

85 The co-option of the 'Martovites' shortly after the League Congress.

86 By 'super-centre', Martov appears to be making a polemical reference to the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, which, in his view bossed the Central Committee. He is not referring to the Party Council, which, in the view of most delegates to the Second Congress (including Martov himself at that time), was to be the Party's supreme body, even though Lenin, in drafting the Party constitution, had not intended this.

### I. Noting

- 1) that the task of developing the self-awareness and the independent political activity of the proletariat should define not only the tactics, but also the organisation of the Social-Democratic Party;
- 2) that at the level of development so far attained by the workers' movement in Russia, this task can be carried out by the Russian Social Democracy in an all-sided fashion only within the framework and on the basis of a strictly centralised organisation;
- 3) that the urgent demand for such an organisation has produced within the Russian Social Democracy, as a reaction against the recently reigning anarchy, a tendency towards bureaucratic centralism, which in its very essence is incapable of organically uniting the component elements of an association, which pushes into the foreground not internal unification, but external, formal unity, unity which is being realised and preserved by purely mechanical means, by means of the systematic suppression of individual initiative and independent collective activity;
- 4) that the triumph of such centralism in our Party organisation would provoke the strongest dissension between its most independent, most politically mature elements on the one hand, and the founders of a system of autocratic-bureaucratic leadership by the Party on the other, dissension which would inevitably drive the defenders of this system, in the imaginary interests of discipline, to the adoption of means and methods of self-defence that are incompatible with the historical tasks of Social Democracy, means and methods which are capable of corrupting the thought and will of these representatives, of introducing confusion into the minds of the mass of comrades, of lowering their level of political consciousness, of discrediting the very idea of Social-Democratic centralism and ultimately of reducing Russian Social Democracy to internal and external disorganisation;
- 5) that this state of affairs within it would be reflected in the most disastrous manner onto the political development of the proletariat, depriving it of the possibility of carrying out its immediate historical mission – that of preparing the Russian proletariat for an independent political role in the period of the revolutionary destruction of the autocratic state system in Russia;

Noting all this, the League addresses all conscious comrades with the appeal to conduct a systematic struggle against the tendency towards bureaucratic centralism, within the framework of the Party rules, in the name of the centralism of true Social Democracy, which is necessary for the unification of the Russian proletariat into an independent political Party.

## II. Noting

- 1) that the task of the Second Congress of the Party was to consolidate the Party unity that had been prepared by the literary and organisational work of *Iskra* and the OC,
- 2) that this ideological and organisational work of preparing the Party Congress strove to bring together all revolutionary Social-Democratic forces around two independent Party Centres in order to organically link all conscious elements of the workers' movement in a fighting, centralised, political Party,

The League expresses its solidarity with the decisions of the Second Congress, which gave the Party a programme and sketched out a basis for Party tactics, and welcomes the adopted Party rules that are binding on all parts of the Party as an outstanding step towards the removal of the disorganisation which has reigned up to now; the League ascertains further that the exit of the Bund from the Party represents a lamentable fact in terms of its consequences for the all-Russian workers' movement, and its consequences for the Jewish workers' movement in particular, which appears to be the result of the prevalence in the organisational policy of the Bund of the falsely understood interests of the Jewish proletariat over the real class interests of the whole proletariat of Russia.

Along with this, the League expresses its profound regret that, thanks to the appearance at the Congress of a tendency which acted, in essence, contrary to the previous policy of *Iskra*, not enough attention was paid to creating sufficient guarantees that would protect the independence and the authority of the Central Committee when working out the Party rules; and that Congress, in its establishment of official Party Centres, ignored the already established link with actually formed Centres, thus weakening the positive significance of the steps which it made during the first half of its work, and making the work of Party operatives towards the



unification of the conscious fighting elements of the proletariat significantly more difficult.

### III.

The Second Ordinary Congress of the League notes with pleasure the outstanding role that its delegate<sup>87</sup> played at the Second Congress of the Party and expresses its full solidarity with the position taken by the delegate in the discussion of programmatic questions and the question of the position of the Bund in the Party.

At the same time, the League regrets that it is unable to recognise the position of comrade Lenin on organisational questions as one which corresponds with those opinions which form the basis of the activity of the League, and which were always put forward by the Editorial Boards of *Zaria* and *Iskra*.

'The resolutions of this Congress show what kind of character the 'principled' disagreements on the question of bureaucratic authoritarianism' had, says comrade Lenin.<sup>88</sup> That the resolutions of the League upset comrade Lenin is understood and we, in working them out, tried in every way to soften the pain of the impression with the choice of appropriate expressions, especially in the resolution which gave a political evaluation of the conduct of comrade Lenin at the Party Congress. Comrade Lenin clearly considered these resolutions sufficiently 'principled' to not protest against them with a declaration of withdrawal from the organisation, the Congress of which, he now states in print, 'became an arena for the settling of accounts regarding the Party Congress . . .'.<sup>89</sup> For the 'super-centre', clearly, different rules of political behaviour exist from those for ordinary members of the Party.

Having defined its attitude to the Majority and the Minority, the League occupied itself with a discussion of its new rules. The draft of them, as the CC later testified when, in its own words, 'the exceptional circumstances which

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87 The delegate was Lenin, who cast both votes granted to the League. Originally both Martov and Lenin were to serve as the League's delegates, but the two delegates of the Russian *Iskra* organisation (Lengnik, Krzhizhanovskii) failed to attend, possibly having encountered difficulties leaving Russia. Apparently on the toss of a coin, Martov was appointed as Russian *Iskra*'s representative at Congress over Lenin, despite the latter's closer links to the organisation.

88 See Appendix 1.

89 See Appendix 1.

provoked the measures adopted against the League no longer applied', did not contain 'discrepancies of principle in relation to the organisational rules of the Party'. The draft defined the functions of the League as one of the committees of the Party. One can hardly call the introduction of this draft into the discussion 'the onslaught of the Opposition'. Indeed, a whole series of 'onslaughts' were carried out against the League: 1) the demand that the rules be regarded as non-operational prior to their approval; 2) the demand that the organ of the League – the administration – should not be elected by it, but should be replaced by the CC; 3) the demand that the CC be given the right to introduce members into the League without the latter's agreement; 4) the demand that the League refrain from exercising the right to publish literature. All these demands were rejected by the League after thorough discussion, on the grounds that they contradicted the Party rules and threatened to disorganise the organisation. Just as in accordance with the logic of the 'state of siege', every 'proposal' is tantamount to a 'demand', and just as 'proposals' reinforced by agreement with the super-centre are the very same, in essence, as the 'proposals' of the centre, then in this refusal by the League of these demands it was impossible not to see 'the provocation of the CC into completely exceptional measures' (that really takes the biscuit!). The super-centre declared that they considered the rejection of one of their 'onslaughts' to be 'a scandalous breach of the Party rules', and to the cries that rang out: 'Precisely which paragraph of the rules?' – they answered with the immortal phrase: 'the interpretation of the rules belongs to the central institutions of the Party; and this they will do'. The super-centre winked significantly at the centre: you said you would take charge! Indeed, the centre took charge.

Immediately after the adoption by the League of the entire rules, a member of the CC<sup>90</sup> 'asked' the League to introduce all the changes which had been rejected by it into rules, which had already been discussed for two days, and as a punishment, probably, for not having its wish granted (the comrade maintained a thoughtful silence during all the debates), added one further change, which ran thus in the original version: 'with the aim of removing all possible misunderstandings, we request a rule which states that the CC defines the location of the administration'.<sup>91</sup> The state of heightened security is always and everywhere accompanied by that which, in Italy, Crispi termed *domicilio coatto* and which in Russia is termed 'exile under open surveillance'.<sup>92</sup>

90 Lengnik, according to Krupskaya 1930, p. 110. See also Smidovich 1904, pp. 123–4.

91 Smidovich 1904, p. 124.

92 Francesco Crispi (1819–1901) was an Italian politician who was influential during the campaign to unite Italy during the 1860s, as well as after the final unification of the country in

The League answered the 'request' with a decision to appeal to the CC against the actions of its delegate (another example of the 'boycott of the central institutions'!) Wherever and whenever the state of siege was in force, such a decision was considered as 'a provocation to exceptional measures'. These followed immediately: the member of the CC declared the League 'unlawful', its meeting to be 'unlawful', its decisions 'unlawful', its election, which had still not taken place at that time, unlawful in advance, those sitting in the hall which had served as an 'arena' for the 'onslaught' to be practically illegal, whilst withdrawing himself from 'this meeting' and suggesting that the meeting itself follow him. Only then did we realise the somewhat strange attitude of the comrade from the CC towards us over the previous days: the League had invited him to its meeting with a consultative vote. For all its passion for a 'boycott', the Minority was clearly not able to resist the temptation of familiarising itself with the authoritative opinion of the 'central' comrade. He did not arrive for the opening of the Congress having sent, instead of himself, the letter mentioned earlier with a greeting to the Congress and thanks expressed for the invitation. But on the second day he appeared in person and sat with us for five days, not once making use of his consultative rights, not giving his opinion on even one of the questions that agitated the Congress during the whole time – questions of the correctness of the interpretations which had been given to the rules by both sides. He remained silent all the while and 'made notes in a little book'. And when, on the sixth day, he began to speak, it was only to declare the League abolished as 'it had not carried out the orders of the CC'. We invited him so as to hear his opinion and gave him a consultative voice, he answered the invitation with a gracious letter and appeared only on the following day, as if without invitation, for the issuing of 'orders' which followed on day six...

With the departure of the comrade from the CC, the League finished its practical business and dispersed. Comrade Lenin did not sleep that whole

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1870. Initially a left republican, in 1864 he declared himself to be a monarchist, and with Italy's consolidation as a nation-state, he acquired a reputation for authoritarianism. In 1894, as prime minister he introduced a state of siege in Sicily in response to the activities of the Sicilian Workers' League, a mass movement of labourers and poor peasants which had organised huge strikes on the island demanding: higher wages, fairer rents, improved conditions for share croppers and access to common land. To suppress the movement, the rule of law was suspended, and the press and all political associations were banned. Forty thousand troops were dispatched to the island, who shot demonstrators, carried out extra-judicial executions and arrested the leaders of the League. Many of the latter were exiled to various islands, hence Martov's allusion to 'exile under open surveillance'.

night, trying to guess what 'bureaucratic tendencies' the League was speaking about in its resolutions – and this he did not guess. Comrade Lenin looked around him and could not find 'bureaucrats', finding only 'firm *Iskra*-ites'. He did not think to look in the mirror ...

This is the true story of 'the apogee of military action'. Now that the CC has considered it necessary to correct its representative and to stop this disorganising of the League's work,<sup>93</sup> which had begun at all points, and having officially announced the latter's correctness in principle in the conflict which has taken place, comrade Lenin, possibly in his own interests, does not force us to subject this page from our Party's history to a critical survey. But comrade Lenin cannot help himself and even threatens that 'the minutes will reveal everything'. Let comrade Lenin blame himself and the representative of the CC who released his letter<sup>94</sup> (the one who arrived at the League on a white horse) – if such a true account awakens some unpleasant impressions in their memories, if some Social Democrat, dumbfounded, asks himself: after this shameful fiasco, how could this 'political activist' fail to atone for his guilt before the Party by means of a timely and voluntary departure from office?

'The atmosphere of a split came down so threateningly after the Congress of the League that Plekhanov decided to co-opt the old Editorial Board', says Lenin.<sup>95</sup> This is untrue. Plekhanov could not have 'decided' the co-option, for he had only one vote in the board. But comrade Plekhanov, as the reader will see from his explanation,<sup>96</sup> announced his withdrawal from the Editorial Board if an end was not put to the split-provoking tactics of Lenin by means of a decisive step on the road towards an understanding with the Minority. From the very same explanation, the reader will see that comrade Lenin manages to give him facts served with a very tasty sauce when the situation demands it. Comrade Lenin did not consider it 'permissible to stand in the way of a possible peace in the Party' and thus left the Editorial Board despite his opposition to 'overturning the decisions of Congress'. All this is fiction. Comrade Lenin left because he did not want to recognise his defeat and because he did not have the forces to lead the newspaper without the help of comrade Plekhanov

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93 Martov is referring to the concessions granted in negotiations with Krzhizhanovskii following Lenin's resignation from the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. One of these involved recognising the decisions of League Congress as lawful.

94 It is far from clear to the translator which letter is being referred to here.

95 See Appendix I of the pamphlet.

96 See Appendix II of the pamphlet.

and without the support of his authority. And that is all – there is no need *aus der Noth ein Tugend machen*.<sup>97</sup>

The Opposition demanded first one thing then another, says Lenin, immediately after the passage just cited. The experienced reader will at once note that there is some kind of break in the exposition here. Why would the Opposition, having up to this point ‘demanded’ nothing, but only ‘boy-cotted’, suddenly present demands? The reader is not mistaken and, having found out what the problem is, understands that Lenin is speculating on the slow-wittedness of the inexperienced reader, whom it is possible to ‘stir up’ with the words: ‘the Opposition demands’. Lenin simply omits one point. Having received from Lenin the announcement of his departure from the Editorial Board (in the form of an answer to the proposal about co-option made by Plekhanov), comrade Plekhanov officially turned to Starover and the remaining three former editors of *Iskra* with an enquiry from the CO: what measures on the part of the Centres would assist the restoration of peace in the Party in our opinion?<sup>98</sup>

Given that Lenin asked for the publication of his resignation only together with the publication of the decisions of Congress, Plekhanov did not consider that he had the right to inform us of the departure of Lenin when it had already taken place. We, having received the enquiry from the editor of the CO, called a conference of ‘Opposition’ comrades made up mainly of member of the League and, in accordance with its decision, worked out the following answer to Plekhanov:

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97 By the way, comrade Lenin mentions that he remains a contributor to *Iskra* after his departure from the Editorial Board. He really declares his intention to continue contributing. Lenin will never ‘resort’ to a boycott (he was not brought up that way!) But on the other hand he, having announced his wish to contribute and having broadcast this display of ‘discipline’, in reality contributed nothing to *Iskra*. Would it not have been more direct to declare outright his unwillingness to contribute? [Martov’s footnote] ‘Aus der Noth ein Tugend Machen’: to make a virtue of a necessity (German).

98 Here Martov appears to be suggesting that, prior to Lenin’s resignation, his faction was not making ‘demands’ of the Editorial Board in terms of co-option. If concrete evidence is really needed to disprove such a claim, it can be found in Chapter 17 of the collection, which includes the demand for the restoration of the old Editorial Board. Martov is perhaps unconsciously admitting at this point that, in the negotiations between the leadership and the Opposition, it was mainly the former who proposed concrete solutions to the disagreement, the part of the latter being merely that of refusing the various offers put to them. Only thus can he claim to have never made demands of the Editorial Board.

Highly Respected GV!

We accept your proposal regarding the working-out conditions for the elimination of the conflict which has arisen. Here are our conditions:

- 1) Negotiations are to be carried out between the present Editorial Board of the CO and the CC on the one hand, and representatives of the Opposition which was formed as a result of the decisions of the Party Congress on the other;
- 2) The restoration of the old Editorial Board of *Iskra*;
- 3) A definite number of representatives of the Opposition are to be admitted into the CC, the precise number to be determined by negotiations;
- 4) Two places in the Council are to be granted to the Opposition. Note: from the moment negotiations start, all co-option to the CC comes to a stop.
- 5) The Congress of the League and its decisions are recognised as lawful. One member of its minority is co-opted into the administration of the League.

ps We pose these conditions as the only ones which can secure the possibility of the Party avoiding a development of the disagreements which have arisen among us into a chronic conflict which would threaten the very existence of the Party.

On behalf of comrades,

Starover

Only one point requires explanation: why do we, whilst demanding the restoration of the old Editorial Board, especially stipulate the granting of two places in the Council to the Minority? According to the rules, the Editorial Board occupies two places in this institution. Our stipulation is explained by the fact that, in previous negotiations with the CO, negotiations which did not lead to anything, comrade Lenin, as we have already pointed out, placed before everything else the demand that he be guaranteed a place on the Council on behalf of the Editorial Board, independent of its composition and its good will. We had every basis to think that comrade Lenin, after the forced surrender of one fortress – the CO – would want to consolidate a 'super-centre' in the

highest institution of the Party. Below, the reader will see that we were not mistaken in this presupposition. And comrade Lenin, for the moment, clearly hopes to assure someone (and perhaps also himself?) that this entirely lawful 'demand' of the Minority – the appointment of delegates to a representative institution by that collective which they are expected to represent – can be depicted as something to a high degree pretentious?

Comrade Lenin, as we can see, incorrectly claims that the 'Opposition' demanded 'three places on the CC'.<sup>99</sup> This was not so. The Opposition did not name a figure that was necessary, in its opinion, for the recovery of the CC, as it could not know the precise composition of the CC at that moment. In order to avoid a *quid pro quo*, it stipulated an end to the receiving of new members into the CC prior to the start of negotiations as a preliminary condition for these negotiations – from the moment the CC received its answer to the enquiry of the CO. This condition which, it goes without saying, was tacitly accepted by the CC, was violated in the most scandalous manner, as we found out only later.

But, protests comrade Lenin, the Opposition 'demanded' only such tangible things as places on the CO, the CC and the Council and did not demand 'a change to the non-existent system of bureaucratism, formalism, autocracy, mechanism' and so on.<sup>100</sup> Really, we ask, does Lenin rate the naivety of his 'hards' so highly that he hopes to pull the wool over the eyes of some of them by posing the question thus? I understand that comrade Lenin and his ilk would have been glad, had the demands of the Opposition born such an 'ideally' ... stupid character. What, in reality, is more stupid than to 'demand' that comrade Lenin, or the *voevode*<sup>101</sup> from the CC who entered the League Congress on a white horse and tried to abolish all forms of 'particular' creativity, 'reject' the system of bureaucratism? It is possible either to wean you off or to cure you of this system, comrade Lenin, but it is in no way possible to invite you to reject it with your own force, and in order to wean you and your confederates off it or to cure you and them of it, it is necessary to put you in an appropriate situation, which would block to the left and to the right your fighting left hand in order to better utilise your right for Party work. The platonic demand that Lenin and the current CC 'reject the system' which constitutes their nature would be naive to the highest degree, and the Opposition,

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99 It is far from clear where and when Lenin did this, if indeed he did it at all.

100 See Appendix 1.

101 A high military rank in feudal Russia, a town governor. Here it is used to mean the representative of autocratic power in a given location, Lengnik's perceived role at the League Congress.



in a manner that could not be clearer, documented its mistrust towards 'the system of bureaucratic mechanism' when it demanded 1) a decisive reorganisation of the personnel of the Centres and 2) and end to the 'military action' against the League, thereby fully disavowing the *voevode* from the CC mentioned above. The Opposition considered that for the moral destruction of the system of 'bureaucratism', this one disavowal would do much more than, say, a solemn renunciation by comrade Lenin of all harmful 'isms'.

The CC informed the 'Opposition' that its proposals would be considered and thus gave hope of a 'good peace'. Unfortunately, these hopes were not justified. Instead of an attempt by means of a comradely exchange of thoughts to honestly and seriously clarify the situation, or even a look at what took place at the Congress of the League, the CC, splendidly confirming its propensity towards bureaucratic methods of leading the Party with a new example, sent the Opposition an astonishing 'ultimatum' about which comrade Lenin speaks when he succinctly enumerates the 'concessions' proposed by the CC.<sup>102</sup> Comrade Lenin 'forgets' to add: 1) that, in sending these proposed 'concessions', the CC violated a condition accepted by it – that of conducting collective negotiations in the name of both Centres (the working-out of this 'ultimatum' was hidden from Plekhanov); 2) that, violating a condition accepted by it in a most impermissible manner – not broadening its composition during the negotiations – the CC brought *ad hoc* into the CC two members from among those most compromised in the struggle against the Minority, and these two members participated in the working-out of the 'ultimatum'.

Given that Lenin, despite representations made both to him and the émigré representative of the CC, dares to mention that these negotiations, which led to the CC being obliged to acknowledge its moral defeat and to it withdrawing its demands, just as it had earlier retracted its circular to the League; given that Lenin, with the consent and approval of this member of the CC, tried to cast the suspicion on us in print that we represented a disorganising tendency in the course of these negotiations; given that, whilst doing this, he remained silent about the specific aspects of these negotiations, details which fully explain why the negotiations did not lead to agreement – he does this in the hope of a readiness on our part to spare him and his collaborators, a readiness that has been demonstrated so many times – in view of all of this, we are

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102 The terms of this 'ultimatum' are stated in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 187, 202–3. It was apparently delivered on 25 November 1903 N.S. It contained yet another formula for co-opting the 'Martovites' to the leading bodies of the RSDLP and proposed the annulment of the decisions of the League Congress.

compelled to print those documents which show what we are fighting against and how we are fighting against it, in a manner which could not be clearer.<sup>103</sup>

### *To Comrade Starover*

The CC of the RSDLP, which takes an extremely sympathetic attitude to Plekhanov's attempt to establish a good peace in the Party, informs the representatives of the Opposition, in the name of which you wrote your letter to Plekhanov on 3 November 1903, of the following decisions, which were adopted unanimously.

For the most reliable elimination of the conflict which has arisen in the Party, reckoning not only with all the circumstances of the present positions of both sides but also with the probability of further steps on the part of each of these sides, the CC, in the interests of a good peace, presents to the representatives of the Opposition an ultimatum, the basic features of which can be summarised in the following points:

- 1) The co-option onto the Editorial Board of the four former editors of *Iskra*.
- 2) One place in the Party Council is granted to the Opposition
- 3) Two members of the Opposition are co-opted onto the CC and are chosen by the CC, whose freedom of choice is not limited in any way.
- 4) The League is obliged to submit to the decisions of the CC and to the decision of the Party Council of 1 November 1903. The CC introduces comrades Deutsch, Dan and Lesenko into the administration of the League, whilst guaranteeing that they will not prove to be in a minority in this administration, and expresses the hope that in proportion to the establishment of peace in the Party, the reorganisation of the League will gradually be carried out more and more in accordance with the wishes of the members of the League.

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103 In the afterword to 'Letter to a Comrade', recently published by the CC, Lenin has the impudence to ask of the Editorial Board: 'For what reason does the Editorial Board not explain to readers "why it expressed the wish to consign certain facts to oblivion?"' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 134) Comrade Lenin, you know why the Editorial Board agreed to the request of the CC 'to consign these facts to oblivion', and in a letter to you regarding the refusal of the Editorial Board to print your 'Letter' in No. 54 of *Iskra*, it is directly stated that the Editorial Board agreed to 'consign to oblivion' the fact of the attempt of the CC to seize control of the Party Council and the Editorial Board of the CO, an attempt which discredited the entire Party [Martov's footnote].

- 5) As well as emphasising one more time the full comradely trust towards members of the Opposition, which is demonstrated by the agreement on co-option to the Centres, the CC of the Party repeats that the measures taken by them in relation to the League bear a completely exceptional character. So that there cannot be a shadow of suspicion that the CC wanted to deprive comrades of their freedom to express their opinion and the freedom to represent their opinion at Party Congresses, the CC declares that in any case, independent of the outcome of any negotiations, it is ready to allow members of the Opposition a separate literary group and to grant it the right of representation at the Party Congress.
- 6) The present ultimatum was composed at a session of the CC in ... on 25 November 1903 (new style) and in view of some serious difficulties ... the time taken to answer it can only be, unfortunately, one day: an answer sent by post is expected before 10 a.m. on 27 November. In the case of agreement of the Opposition to the present conditions, a more detailed version will be worked out in a separate agreement.

Reply to the following address: Dispatch Office of *Iskra*, FAO CC.

Central Committee, RSDLP.



*To the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic  
Labour Party*

Comrades!

In response to the letter to comrade Starover of 25 November, the undersigned draw the attention of the CC to the following circumstances:

- 1) After the regrettable incidents at the Congress of the League, comrade Plekhanov approached us with the suggestion that we state which measures on the part of the central institutions could re-establish normal relations between the two parts of the Party and restore the trust of that part of the Party to which we belong in those central institutions. In his letter of 3 November, comrade Starover, on behalf of comrades living in Geneva, stated our opinion on this matter. The declaration that has now been sent to us by

comrade Starover, which represents an answer to this letter, causes us not a little amazement. The CC presents us with, to use its expression, a clear 'ultimatum'. Generally speaking, an ultimatum refers to a demand that definite acts be carried out on the part of whoever it is presented to, under the threat of the initiation of military action in the case of non-compliance. The CC, unfortunately, does not mention what kind of military action against the 'representatives of the Opposition' it intends to initiate if its 'ultimatum' is not accepted.

- 2) In the letter of comrade Starover of 3 November it was pointed out that the Opposition made, as a fundamental condition for negotiations, the conducting of them with the CC and the CO of the Party simultaneously. In accordance with this, the editor of *Iskra* – comrade Plekhanov – along with comrade 'X', a member of the CC,<sup>104</sup> were invited to a conference which met in...<sup>105</sup> on 23 November, which was dedicated to the opening of negotiations, an event which comrade 'X', the member of the CC, was unexpectedly willing to convert into a private conference. Meanwhile, the present declaration has been issued by the CC alone and we have to, before anything else, turn to comrade Plekhanov with the question of his participation in the composition of the 'ultimatum' presented to us.
- 3) Despite the fact that the 'ultimatum' issued from the CC alone, it did propose 'the co-option of the four former editors of *Iskra* to the Editorial Board of the CO'. On this point, we have nothing to say to the CC given that, on the one hand we are unable to enter the Editorial Board by means of invitation from the present editor of *Iskra*, and on the other, the CC is not granted the right to give out places in the CO in the rules.
- 4) Furthermore, the CC formulated the second point of its 'ultimatum' thus: 'One place is granted to a member of the Opposition on the Party Council'. Given that the CC can dispose of only those two places in the Party Council which, according to the rules of the Party (§5), are filled by the CC, then this proposal can only be understood in the sense that, where the CC has taken on new members from the Opposition, as is mentioned in point 3 of the ultimatum, one of the latter would be granted a place on the Council. The CC's proposal appears to us to be completely superfluous, given that we consider today's reinforcement of the Editorial Board of the CO by comrade

<sup>104</sup> 'X' would be Krzhizhanovskii ('Clair'), if Krupskaya's recollections are accurate.

<sup>105</sup> The place of the meeting is represented by a gap in the text, presumably for conspiratorial reasons.

Plekhanov with the four former editors of *Iskra* to be an entirely sufficient guarantee of the normal and adequate exercising of the Council's functions. If point 2 of the 'ultimatum' is to be understood as an attempt by the CC to overturn a method of co-option to the Council defined by the rules, and to put its composition into a position that is dependent on the CC, we must recognise this as an attempt worthy of the strongest condemnation on the part of the CC to usurp an authority which has not been granted to it by the rules, and in the name of the prestige of our Party we consider it our duty to draw the attention of the CC to the necessity of nipping in the bud such intentions if they emerge in our midst.

- 5) The co-option of two members of the Opposition onto the CC according to the choice of the latter, which is proposed in point 3, demands 'that the freedom of this election should not be submitted to any kind of limitation'. We merely turn attention to the illogicality of this stipulation under conditions in which the freedom of election is already limited by the attachment of the new members of the CC to the 'Opposition'. Given that the whole purpose of our negotiations boils down to the reduction of causes obstructing the re-establishment of trust on the part of half the Party towards the CC, then only a wish to avoid real peace can explain this stipulation, which under current conditions cannot but signify the desire of the CC to continue the policy of persecuting some 'Opposition' element or other, a policy which leads to conflict.
- 6) In point 4 of the ultimatum, the CC demands that the League 'submit to the decisions of the CC and the decision of the Council of 1 November 1903'. Not being authorised to answer specifically for the League, we point out only that the League has expressed its readiness to submit to the demands of the CC in that it decided to deliver over for the latter's scrutiny its conflict with the member of the CC, 'V'.<sup>106</sup> Given that the CC did not undertake any negotiations with the administration of the League on the question of this conflict, and given that it did not examine the complaints of the League, which were sent to its place of sojourn in Russia, then it is more than strange for it to present from its side the proposal 'to introduce comrades Deutsch, Dan and Lesenko' into the administration of the League, which at the present time is constituted by these comrades, in accordance with the elections which were conducted at the Congress. The right of the CC to introduce into the administration of

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106 Presumably Lengnik.

the League any individual who has been proclaimed thus by the member of the CC, comrade 'V', without election, was disputed by the League, and the current proposal of the CC is far from one which would have a 'conciliatory' character, producing on the contrary the impression of a provocation, which deliberately stirred up the disagreement about the interpretation of the rules, which had emerged between the League and one member of the CC. Equally, the promise of the CC that the current personnel of the administration of the League 'would not be left in a minority', which was combined with the expression of hope (!) that 'the reorganisation of the League would be carried out in forms that correspond all the more to the wishes of the members of the League', represents an obvious mockery of an organisation which, in its complaint against the actions of one of the latter's members, a complaint which went unexamined by the CC, protested against the desire to reorganise a normally functioning organisation by means of an unlawful decree of the CC. As regards the strange reference to 'the decision of the Council of 1 November', nothing about this decision remains unknown to members of the League, and if there are rumours in the emigration concerning it, we are inclined to think that such a decision should have been communicated to the members of the League as an organisation to which this decision clearly relates. It is clear that the League cannot submit to such a decision of the Council, the very existence of which for the moment remains in doubt.

- 7) Emphasising its 'full comradely trust towards members of the Opposition', the CC considers it necessary to 'repeat that the measures taken by it in relation to the League bear an entirely exceptional character'. Welcoming this announcement, which fully corresponds to our opinion of the character of the measures taken in the name of the CC, we would suggest that the more 'exceptional' (in other words, not justified by the rules of the Party) the character of these measures, the more decisively should the CC cover their traces in the interests of securing the dignity of the Party. Unfortunately, everything that is said by the CC about the League tends towards exacerbating the regrettable results of these 'exceptional' measures.
- 8) 'So that there should not be the shadow of a suspicion that the CC wanted to deprive comrades of their freedom of expression ... the CC declares that whatever the outcome of the current negotiations, it is ready to allow the members of the Opposition a literary group'.

This declaration caused us no little amazement: at the conference of 23 November, comrade 'X', in the name of the CC, told us that the existence of such a group had already been granted to comrades Axelrod, Zasulich, Starover and Martov, and that Martov had already been informed of this on 21 November, 'X' having indicated that it would be in force up to the start of the present negotiations and that it had not been brought to the attention of interested persons for purely accidental reasons. Thus, in its present announcement, the CC advertises its 'liberalism' in relation to the Opposition with its readiness to permit something it had already once allowed its members. In order to avoid further misunderstandings about this, we therefore ask for the text of the decision of the CC about the literary group, about which comrade 'X' spoke on the 23 November, as well as the one composed in . . .

Finishing on this point, our remarks on the essence of the 'ultimatum' presented to us, the undersigned representatives of the Opposition declare to the CC in the name of themselves and all those comrades expressing solidarity with them both in Russia and abroad, that in the document of the CC that has been examined, those very tendencies are displayed which the Opposition should protest and fight against, tendencies which it considers corrosive to all the foundations of Party life. That is why, given the essence of that conflict which produced the current negotiations, we have to announce to you with full conviction, comrades, that until you display a serious and thoughtful attitude to questions of Party duty and do not put at the basis of all your activities, at very least, a strict observation of the Party rules and an actual, as opposed to only verbal, comradely attitude to members of the Party who have invested in you the responsible function of preserving its unity – until then, all negotiations which have the goal of re-establishing normal relations of Party life will prove fruitless.

Geneva, 26 November 1903

(signatures follow . . .)

Face facts. Having agreed with the Editorial Board of the CO to enter into negotiations with the Opposition, the CC, behind its back, sent an ultimatum – the threat of new 'scorpions' to the Opposition – and 'promised' the Opposition in this document that it would not obstruct Plekhanov in his intention of inviting



the four individuals onto the Editorial Board and of giving two places in the CC, chosen by the latter, to the Opposition if, in compensation for this, the new Editorial Board refrained from exercising its right, stated in the rules, to occupy both its places in the Council, and if the League clearly and visibly submitted to the unlawful (or, if you like, 'exceptional') attempts at its 'reorganisation'. Only on these conditions would the CC concede the co-option of the four members of the Editorial Board and the two into the CC.

But co-option onto the Editorial Board in accordance with the rules depends on the Editorial Board, which is currently composed of Plekhanov alone. Consequently, the threat which was contained in the 'ultimatum' – in case of its not being obeyed – signified the intention of the CC to prevent Plekhanov from carrying out the co-option. We do not know how this threat could have been carried out; but we know very well by what means another attempt, equally 'unlawful' from the point of view of the rules, was to have been carried out – the attempted seizure of the Council or, to be more precise, one place in it which belonged, according to the rules, to the Editorial Board (in the case of the latter being co-opted after all). According to the rules, the Editorial Board and the CC, 'each send two members to the Council' (§8). The Editorial Board elected at Congress delegated comrade Lenin and, shall we say, comrade 'Y', who did not belong to the Editorial Board.<sup>107</sup> When comrade Lenin announced his departure from the Editorial Board, he 'handed in his notice' to the Council as well. Comrade 'Y' did not consider it necessary to follow this example. If the threat of an 'ultimatum' had been carried out, comrade 'Y' would have said: *j'y suis et j'y reste*,<sup>108</sup> and would have remained a member of the Council, despite the will of the current personnel of that collective, the representation of which he was granted by the previous personnel. True, on this occasion we would have obtained a 'bureaucratism' that went further than any seen previously, a specimen of 'Bonapartism' in the very worst sense of this word, but extraordinary times require extraordinary measures.<sup>109</sup>

107 Apparently, Lev Halperin ('Koniagin'). (See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 189–90).

108 'Here I am and here I'm staying' (French).

109 Given the times we are in, it seems that we have to prove, in greater detail, the incompatibility of that only conceivable interpretation of the 'law' which could have been used to justify the strange opinion of comrade 'Y' as to the possibility of his remaining in the Council against the will of the Editorial Board. If the members of the Council sent by the CO and the CC are irreplaceable, then they are there for life, for in any case, a Congress cannot recall them in so far as it did not appoint them. The minutes of the Second Congress show that the Majority of the Congress expressed the definite wish that four members of the Council be representative of the opinions of the CO and the CC, some-

Does Lenin try to deny that this was the intention? If he does, then here is the proof. For two weeks after the answer to the 'ultimatum' (we will speak about the events taking place during this time below), the representative of the CC (the same one that made this entry on the white horse) wrote in an official letter to the Editorial Board concerning its enquiry about the same notorious 'oblivion' trick of the CC: 'I ask you, comrades, to pay attention to the fact that the CC has made since that time (from the time the "ultimatum" was dispatched) two further (?) voluntary (!) concessions, having advised comrade "Y" to hand in his resignation (!) and having tried to settle matters with the League "amicably".'

It is clear that the CC gives itself credit for 'advising' comrade 'Y' 'to hand in his resignation notice' voluntarily from the institution in which, at the present time, he represents nobody and nothing apart from an unprincipled state of siege. We very much regret that the requirements of conspiracy do not allow us to print the name of this figure, who made up his mind to play such an... inconvenient role. Is it not true, comrade Lenin, that the Party should 'know everything' about its leaders?

How was this 'voluntary concession' carried out? The answer of the Opposition to the 'ultimatum', as the reader can see, was very far from 'unconditional submission' and, despite Lenin's assertion, it bore a principled character: the Opposition refused to parley with the CC about an agreement so long as the latter did not break with the basic political line of the state of siege – a bureaucratic attitude towards comrades and a Bonapartist one to the Party constitution. Moreover, the Opposition answered by accepting comrade Plekhanov's proposal to admit its members to the Editorial Board and consequently the filling of the two places belonging to the Editorial Board in the Council. The CC was faced with either prudently withdrawing its threats, or going further down the road of a revolutionary adventure.

A meeting was arranged between the member of the CC inspiring the most trust among the Opposition and a member of the 'Opposition',<sup>110</sup> at which the latter tried to convince the comrade from the CC of the criminal light-mindedness of the step into which Lenin was pushing the committee. He succeeded in doing this and the comrade from the CC promised that, at any rate, he would 'boot him out' of the Council (the actual expression), that the campaign against the League would be brought to an end, and that three members of the Minority would be taken into the CC.

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thing which is only possible if the right to recall and replace those elected is recognised, as the term served by the delegates was not defined [Martov's footnote].

110 Krzhizhanovskii.

The member of the CC was very quickly able to convince the member of the Opposition that the attack on the League would be withdrawn and that 'Y' had already left the Council (a handwritten statement from 'Y' was sent). The comrade did not obtain the co-option of the Minority onto the CC, but he argued that no effort would be spared in ensuring that this obstacle to common work would be removed. He declared that he was convinced of the danger of the tactic that had at first been adopted, arguing that he trusted his influence in the CC to bring such a conflict as has flared up in our Party into the framework of a purely literary argument on organisational questions; and requested the return of the text of his ultimatum to the CC. The member of the Opposition answered that it was impossible to fulfil the last request, as the document was in the Party archive and that the Opposition would not try to retrieve it from that place – in a word, that we were ready to consign this episode in our 'war' to oblivion. Together with this, the member of the Opposition declared that the Minority was ready to see in the rejection of the planned *coup d'état* that evolution in the policy of the CC which could lead to peace in the Party and to the containment of the struggle on organisational questions within the realm of literary polemic, if the last of the Opposition's demands were satisfied by the CC. Up to that point, the member of the Opposition announced, the Opposition's 'peaceful' boycott would continue in its previous form. The suggestion made by the member of the CC of not publishing the minutes of the League and Party Congresses was turned down by the member of the Opposition as not corresponding to the interests of the Party, which is to be made familiar with all the outstanding facts of Party life. Equally, the member of the Opposition emphasised that the new Editorial Board of *Iskra* considered it a Party duty to make plain the principled side of the conflict which had taken place within the Party in the columns of *Iskra*.

v      **'The Committees in Russia Conduct a Struggle with the  
Disorganising Tendencies of the Minority'**

At the same time as the sharpest moment of the conflict was thus resolved in a relatively successful manner, Russian committees were still adopting resolutions in the spirit of the one Lenin had dictated to the Tver Committee. We quote these in their entirety:

The *Tver Committee* submits to the decisions of Congress and its central institutions. 4 voices against 1 spoke in favour of asking comrade Martov to join the Editorial Board, and two were in favour of inviting all the

remaining members of the former Editorial Board to act as contributors to the paper.

...

The *St. Petersburg Committee* expresses certainty that the central institutions elected by Congress will successfully carry out the tasks entrusted to them in the cause of uniting the revolutionary Social Democrats and calls all comrades to concerted common work, asking them to take a disapproving attitude to all disorganising attempts.

...

The *Northern Committee*<sup>111</sup> recognises as necessary the unconditional submission by members of the Party to all the decisions of Congress in general, and in relation to the composition and function of the central institutions in particular. The Northern Committee considers every attempt to avoid carrying out these decisions to be harmful to the progress of the Social-Democratic movement and to be not in accordance with the interests of the Party. Therefore, the Northern Committee condemns the disorganising attempts of a part of the Congress which, having forgotten the basic principles of Party discipline, is agitating against submission to the decisions of Congress.

...

The *Tula Committee* of the RSDLP considers it necessary to announce its decisive protest against every conscious or unconscious attempt to disorganise the conscious activity of the CO and the CC, which is, at the present time, especially important. We completely submit to all the decisions

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111 This was presumably the leading body of the Northern Union, a key pro-*Iskra* organisation represented at the Second Congress of the RSDLP with a presence in a number of smaller Russian industrial towns: Yaroslavl, Kostromo, Ivanovo-Vosnesensk, and Vladimir. Its name derived from the fact that it was active in the 'northern' as opposed to the 'southern' region, the former being the European part of the modern-day Russian Federation (excluding the Caucasus), as opposed to the 'southern' part, modern-day Ukraine. Vladimir Noskov was central to its development from 1900 and the Union's declaration for *Iskra* in the summer of 1902, along with a similar declaration by the St. Petersburg and Moscow Committees, strongly influenced Lenin's decision to restart work on the Organising Committee.

of Congress and recognise all elections as entirely sound. As regards the selection of Martov for the Editorial Board of the CO, we decided to ask him to regard the vote of the Congress with greater respect and to accept this selection.

• • •

Recognising ideological and organisational unity as a necessary condition for the success of revolutionary activity, recognising the creation of this unity as the main task of the RSDLP at the present time, considering attempts to obstruct the creation of this unity to be attempts that lead to the weakening of the progress of the Party, the *Voronezh Social-Democratic Fighting Fund*<sup>112</sup> takes a strongly negative attitude towards all attempts to ignore the decisions of Congress and to obstruct their realisation by the Party. Recognising the full lawfulness of these decisions, we fully submit to the central institutions elected by the Congress.

November 1903.

• • •

Expressing full solidarity with the decision of Congress, which has carried out its tasks in an ideal fashion, the *Moscow Committee* fully submits to the central institutions, with the certainty that they will successfully carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Congress in the cause of uniting the revolutionary Social Democracy. The Moscow Committee disapproves of disorganising attempts which undermine the integrity and unity of work; the Moscow Committee proposes that Martov submits to the decisions of Congress and joins the personnel of the Editorial Board.

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The *Nizhnii-Novgorod Committee* recognises the lawfulness of all the decisions of Congress, recognises the bodies elected by it and energetically appeals to all those sincerely devoted to the cause of Social Democracy

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112 No group from Voronezh was present at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, though an 'Economist' organisation known to the Organising Committee was judged to be too insubstantial to justify representation. It is possible that the 'Voronezh Fighting Fund' was a fairly small organisation recently created by *Iskra* supporters as an alternative to this 'Economist' group.

to submit to the organisational statutes worked out at Congress, and to unite around the central institutions elected by it. The Nizhnii-Novgorod Committee resolutely condemns all disorganising attempts which disturb the integrity and unity of Party work.

...

We, the *Russian Social-Democratic Group in Riga*,<sup>113</sup> who conduct Party work and are occupied with the organisation of a local committee of the Party, welcome the Second Congress of the Party as a decisive step towards the abolition of cultural work<sup>114</sup> and disorganisation, features which do not allow the Party to deploy all its forces. As well as this, we recognise the necessity of a centralist, self-contained organisation for the RSDLP, declare our complete adherence to all the decisions of Congress and express our willingness to submit fully to the central institutions of the Party.

Apart from this, we protest in a most resolute manner against the infringement of basic Party positions tolerated by the so-called Minority of Congress and declare that no comradely organisation or individual has any right to cancel or modify the decisions of Congress, in view of which we ask the comrades of the Minority, who up to now have conducted opposition activity, to relinquish disorganising tactics and to submit to the decisions taken by them at the Party Congress.

November 1903

...

The *Saratov Committee*<sup>115</sup> recognises all the decisions of Congress and submits to all the institutions of the Party.

It takes a negative attitude to all activity which is at odds with the decisions of Congress, considering this activity to disorganise the Party. The

113 This group was not represented at the Second Congress of the RSDLP either, although a letter was submitted by it for discussion (through Martov) in which the difficulty of co-ordinating the Social-Democratic movement in a town in which Jewish, Polish and Russian workers had formed separate organisations was discussed. (*Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party* 1978, p. 373 and pp. 489–92).

114 *kul'turnichestvo*: depoliticised cultural and education work dedicated towards the enlightenment of the masses. It is tempting to believe that this is a mistake, and what should appear at this point is *kustarnichestvo*: primitive or 'handicraft' methods in Social-Democratic organisation, which was frequently condemned by *Iskra* supporters during this period.

115 Saratov was not represented at the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

Saratov Committee asks Martov to submit to the decisions of Congress and to join the staff of the Editorial Board.

• • •

The *Ekaterinoslav Committee* expresses its solidarity with all the decisions of Congress, submits to all the central institutions elected by Congress and calls for comrades to unite in expressing their disapproval of all disorganising attempts which violate the integrity and unity of work.

• • •

Recognising the programme worked out by *Iskra* and *Zaria* as the one most precisely and skilfully formulating the historical meaning and basic tasks of Russian Social Democracy, which were already expressed by us in our first leaflet, we heard with a feeling of profound satisfaction the report of the CC's representative, according to which the Second Congress of representatives of Russian Social-Democratic organisations recognised this programme as the programme of our Party.

With this same feeling we received the communication that this Congress had worked out the rules of the Party organisation and had given broad powers to the CC it elected.

Finally, local organisations have united into a powerful Party organisation through it, a Party which follows a clearly stated goal, the organisation thus attaining the possibility of leading the political struggle of the proletariat and of leading it to social revolution by means of a programme of proven worth, a programme which corresponds to the one adopted by Congress.

We hope that, having inspired all the local organisations scattered throughout the vast territory of Russia with this plan of struggle and having increased their forces tenfold through it, the CC will at the same time manage to preserve the purity of the programme adopted at Congress, and will use its influence to eradicate all temporary and transient opportunist and reformist tendencies which in one way or another harm the cause of proletarian struggle.

We hope, on the other hand, that local organisations present their means for the disposal of the CC elected at Congress and will unquestioningly submit to its instructions and demands. These hopes, in our opinion, can be justified only if, on the one hand, the central organisation succeeds in maintaining permanent relations with the local ones, thus securing the timely and uninterrupted distribution among them of the



central newspaper, and on the other (and this is very important) if the members of the local organisations devote themselves entirely to the revolutionary cause of the Party, and they submit their personal interests to this cause. Only such individuals can, in our opinion, take part in organising the fulfilment of Party tasks, only they, in the interests of the cause, should be considered Party members, for under the current political regime, only they can be informed about the affairs of the Party to the required degree.

Placing our forces and means at the Party's disposal, we are obliged, for our part, to subscribe to the funds of the CC 10 percent of all our receipts, hoping that a change for the better in our work will permit us to take on more serious responsibilities in this connection.

In conclusion, we draw the attention of the CC to the necessity of issuing that type of publication which would develop in a popular form the themes advanced in the pages of the CO.

Mid-Urals Committee of the RSDLP<sup>116</sup>

• • •

The *Orlov Committee*<sup>117</sup> declares that it not only considers it a duty to submit to all the decisions of Congress and to work under the immediate direction of the CC, but that any thought as to the possibility of not submitting to the decisions of a Congress in which delegates from all working Social-Democratic organisations took part seems to be fundamentally mistaken. The Orlov Committee therefore expresses its firm disapproval of all comrades who, having taken part in the Congress to the end and in this way having recognised it, now act in violation of its decisions and thus introduce disorganisation into the ranks of the Party.

November 1903

<sup>116</sup> The Mid-Urals Committee was not present at the Second RSDLP Congress. However, in collaboration with members of the Perm and Ufa Committees, a representative of this committee had a fairly lengthy letter defending Lenin's organisational thinking published in *Iskra* No. 63. A translation of this letter is contained in the present volume, along with Plekhanov's polemical reply to it, 'Centralism or Bonapartism', from *Iskra* No. 65. See Chapter 21.

<sup>117</sup> Orlov was not represented at the Second RSDLP Congress. A very small town in modern-day Kirov oblast, somewhat to the west of the Urals, it was used by the tsarist regime as a place of exile. Fedor Dan, the author of the material in Appendix III, served a sentence in this town during the latter part of the 1890s.

• • •

Having heard the report of the representative of the CC concerning the most recent Congress of the émigré League of Russian Revolutionary Social Democrats, the *Odessa Committee* finds that a series of infringements against Party discipline and against the decisions of the Party Congress were allowed at this meeting, and finds that the activity of the majority of the League was directed towards fully discrediting the Party Congress and the central institutions created by the latter. The committee expresses its extreme indignation regarding the actions of the League majority, and suggests that these actions should be subject to the sharp condemnation of the whole Party – the united, correct and planned activity of which is possible only through strict submission to the decisions of Party Congress.

• • •

*Resolution of the Caucasian Union.*<sup>118</sup> After many years of instability and disorder within the Russian Social Democracy, to the great joy of all our active comrades, the RSDLP was at last made a reality at the second ordinary Congress of the Party.

Congress finally worked out and adopted a Party programme and rules, and established central bodies of the Party in the form of the CO, the CC and the Council, declaring *Iskra* to be the CO of the Party. But the comrades who proved to be in a minority at Congress, having violated the elementary principle of the submission of the minority to decisions adopted by a majority, found it possible to obstruct the putting into practice of the decisions of the second ordinary Congress of the Party, and through this proved to be guilty of weakening and disorganising Party work. We, the Caucasian comrades, express our profound regret regarding this unfortunate fact, calling on all comrades who have recognised the full importance and necessity of creating one centralised Party, forgetting petty disagreements, to close ranks for the most energetic and united struggle under the leadership of the already formed central-Party bodies, so that the formidable force of a united proletariat might sooner

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118 A Caucasian Union declared that it had dissolved itself prior to the Second Congress of the RSDLP, where three of its component organisations, the committees of Tiflis (Tbilisi), Batumi and Baku were represented instead. This resolution suggests that the organisation reformed after the Second Congress, and if this was the case, the resolution would appear to indicate an important pillar of support for the Leninist position in the RSDLP.

fulfil its immediate historic mission – the overthrow of the vile yoke of tsarist despotism.

December 1903

Let us dwell for a moment on these resolutions. Apart from the resolution of the mid-Urals committee, they are all pervaded with the one specific aim of expressing their disapproval of the 'Opposition', declaring its activity to be 'dis-organising'. To what degree these committees were familiar with the motives which roused the 'Opposition', and with the character of this opposition, can be judged from the baselessness of the declarations being made. In the overwhelming majority of the committees, not one member of the Opposition was seen, not one of its documents were read. Unfortunately, the resolutions do not lack the imprint of 'official' (government) literature: one cannot call these greeting-card declarations about the 'ideal' fulfilment by Congress of its tasks (Moscow), about the extraordinarily 'successful' character of all the elections (as if the Tula Committee had information that would permit an evaluation of the elected personnel of the CC!) by any other name. Sufficiently naïve is this decision by the Tver-ites to ask the Editorial Board to invite Vera Zasulich to contribute,<sup>119</sup> and Odessa's condemnation of the League for 'violating the decisions of the Party Congress' is simply comical, coming as it did at a time when the CC was obliged to acknowledge the activity of the League as entirely in accordance with the rules. (We have not yet mentioned the fact that the Odessites still could not have known anything about the essence of the 'war' of the CC with the League!) And how characteristic for this particular way of thinking is this 'demand' that Martov 'submit to the demand of Congress' and 'finally' occupy a specific post.

We will not be too strict on the comrades who have adopted these resolutions. A familiarisation of them with the history of the conflict will show them better than anything that in a political party, the resolutions of official institutions should not be adopted in a hasty fashion. We ask Lenin just one more time: if behind you stood not only formal expressions but the actual will of 15 committees, would you really start to claim that the Minority, wretched in your view, is capable of holding up your work?

If the Odessa committee proves to be, in relation to the 'mutinous' League, *plus royaliste que le roi même*,<sup>120</sup> more 'versed in law' than a justice of the peace, then the Saratov Committee went still further and adopted a second resolution of this type:

119 Zasulich is not mentioned in the Tver resolution, contrary to what Martov says here.

120 'More of a royalist than the king himself' (French).

As regards the announcement of the CC, we see it as our duty to announce that, in our opinion, the CC itself violated Party discipline when, instead of liquidating the League, it entered into negotiations with it and made concessions. It created this unwanted precedent for the future and has demeaned its authority in the eyes of its opponents in the Minority. For the moment, prior to an explanation, we consider ourselves to have obligatory relations with the CC and await an explanation from it with impatience.

Apart from that, we express the resolute desire that comrade Lenin occupies the post belonging to him in the Editorial Board, come what may.

Saratov Committee, December 1903

As you can see, the idea of the agrarians<sup>121</sup> is expressed quite directly: '*Und der König absolut, wenn er unsern Willen thut*'.<sup>122</sup> Absolute obedience to the CC ends from that moment when the CC sets 'an unwanted precedent' in the form of 'negotiations' and 'concessions' instead of the 'liquidation' (less of the jargon!) of the 'Opposition'. The Saratov militants – we willingly believe that they hold the Party banner high in matters properly concerning them – only agree to place themselves under obligation to the CC – 'prior to an explanation' of its 'peaceable' behaviour, behaviour not befitting its rank, thus leaving itself a free hand, in case the explanation of the CC does not satisfy their thirst for bullying. Probably, this is in order to visibly indicate to it the undesirability of 'slackening the reins'.

Poor Central Committee! As the bearer of the idea of the 'state of siege', perhaps it is the first to fall victim to its unshakeable logic! All that remains is to take comfort in the fact that, no matter how high the star of the super-centre rises, the 'voice of the people' orders it 'to know its place – at all costs'.

In conclusion, we cite a substantial part of a letter from the Tomsk Committee to the Editorial Board of the CO and a note added to it by the Siberian Union.<sup>123</sup> These documents are interesting as indicators of that point

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121 Presumably the German Agrarian League (*Bund der Landwirte*, founded 1893), a mass, extra-parliamentary pressure group supporting protectionism and led by Junker land-owners. Though officially non-partisan, it was often associated with the political right, opposition to constitutional reform and the development of the German Empire.

122 'Royal power shall be absolute so long as the king carries out our wishes' (German).

123 The Tomsk Committee appears to have been one of several local committees which merged to form the Siberian Union. Only the latter was represented at the Second RSDLP Congress.

of view which more or less characterised the *Iskra*-ites prior to Congress, which is significantly different from that of the present 'Leninists' and which, for all its obvious one-sidedness, smacks neither of bureaucratism nor stagnation:

The Letter to *Iskra* of the Tomsk Committee

The Tomsk Committee saw and continues to see a great mistake in the calling of an all-Party Congress on a democratic basis, one which represents a serious deviation from the principles of revolutionary Social Democracy and which inevitably brings the most deplorable results for the Party cause as a whole. Taking a negative attitude to organisational democracy in general and to the Congress in particular, the Tomsk Committee expects still more deplorable results to follow than those which are communicated in your letter.<sup>124</sup>

Being in the first place firmly convinced that for a real and not merely illusory restoration of the Party, no kind of formal strengthening is required, but as much energetic and intensive assistance as possible to the unifying work of a centre formed one way or another on the part of all active organisations which stand in principled solidarity with it; secondly, seeing from your own letter that the unifying work was far from completed by the former Organising Committee and thirdly, being guided by the report that the currently active CC was elected by that very same majority which: 1) ratified the programme of *Iskra*; 2) recognised *Iskra* as the leading organ and elected Plekhanov and Lenin to the CO; 3) dissolved the amateur organisations, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, and the Union of Russian Social Democrats; 4) condemned the position occupied by the Bund.<sup>125</sup>

The Tomsk Committee expresses its complete readiness to immediately enter into obligatory relations with this CC through its local centre, the Siberian Union, which is already no longer an amateur regional organisation, but an agent of the all-Russian centre.

124 However, the committee admits that it never entered the head of even one of its members that the Congress could go as far as adopting the 'super-democratic' method of electing members to the Editorial Board of the CO [footnote by the authors of the resolution].

125 Incidentally, it would be very interesting to find out whether Congress, in speaking in this way about the Bund, did not actually ask itself the reasons for the evolution of the Bund, and whether it did not enter the head of anybody at Congress to juxtapose this evolution with the democratic nature of the Bund's Party organisation [footnote in the original].

This said, we should note that our recognition of the CC has no connection to the fact that the latter was elected and sanctioned by Congress; this recognition stems entirely from our certainty regarding our principled solidarity with it.

Currently, we are entering into obligatory relations with a CC on the very same basis as we did when we entered into obligatory relations with the CO, and we do not see a substantial difference between these organisations.

We are convinced that the genuine restoration of the Party lies ahead. Considering all the decisions of Congress obligatory for us only in so far as the latter are in accordance with the principles of revolutionary Social Democracy, the Tomsk Committee reserves for itself the 'right' of independent discussion of all those Congress resolutions that are still unknown to it.

In particular, on the question of the Party rules, the Tomsk Committee considers it necessary to declare right away that it will never renounce its 'right' to fight with all its strength for the most pronounced and most consistent realisation of the principles of organisational centralism.

In conclusion, it only remains for us to hope that the Congress, with all its regrettable consequences, serves as a living and graphic proof of the revolutionary inadequacy of democratic principles in the sphere of Party organisation for all comrades who value the principles of revolutionary Social Democracy and the cause of the Party.

16 October 1903.

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Comrades!

In sending you this letter of the Tomsk Committee, we for our part cannot but recognise the justice of their argument in relation to elections which were allowed in both the rules of the Congress and the Congress itself.

We imagined the restoration of the RSDLP completely otherwise ... the CO (*Iskra*), whilst carrying out the work of ideologically unifying the Russian Social Democracy and winning the sympathy of the most able and active workers, independently organises the OC which, under the leadership of the CO, puts into practice all that which was recognised as necessary by the Centre. When the OC brings its work to an end,

maintaining links joining the Centre to all local organisations in order to establish actual unity and planned work, the CO then independently organises the CC. An all-Russian Congress therefore does not seem obligatory. Elections and all the regrettable disarray which took place at Congress could not have taken place according to this way of doing things.

However, we have consciously resolved not to give our opinion concerning the disagreements at Congress (about which we have received the haziest information). We are wandering around in complete darkness... Our opinions are known to you ('Letter to Comrades', the Report of the Conference), and you know, of course, that we would not have difficulty expressing ourselves on this question if only we had the least bit of accurate information. But this we do not have.

Meanwhile, a letter of our delegate<sup>126</sup> was sent to us with the appeal to say: 1) how we understand organisational centralism and 2) our attitude to the alteration of the personnel of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. The description of the entire campaign that took place at Congress is communicated in the letter of the delegate more than unclearly. The first question cannot cause us difficulties, moreover it is hardly necessary for us to answer, as we have already spoken out numerous times on this question. (The letter of 'S' to comrade Comer.). The second question we can only answer when we have a clear picture of what happened. And this was not given to us by the delegate in his letter.

In any case, knowing the personnel of the CO and not having a clue about how the CC could be elected, we cannot fail to trust the CO or fail to wish that it, and it alone, guides the Central Committee elected at Congress.

Perhaps we are wandering, for we do not have a clear picture of what happened?! Then lead us, comrades, out of this darkness.<sup>127</sup>

126 Either Trotsky or Viktor Evseevich Mandelberg (1870–1944).

127 At the last minute, when the present pamphlet was being printed, we received a new resolution from the Saratov Committee:

The *Saratov Committee* considers it its duty to declare that the opportunistic tendency of the new Editorial Board of *Iskra*, which was expressed in the leading article of No. 52, astonished everybody by its unexpectedness and that it provoked bewilderment and much discontent. Opportunism leads only to a decline in the authority of *Iskra* and deprives it of the credit afforded to the leading organ in the Party. We refuse to distribute issues like No. 52 in view of their disorganising influence, which slows down the unifying work of the Party.



## VI Now What?

The policy of the state of siege has evidently collapsed. *Iskra's* transfer into the hands of the old Editorial Board has shown everybody that it was not viable: the campaign against the League inflicted incurable wounds on those holding up the system. The system, in essence, is already dead and it remains only to bury it in order to forget about it as quickly as possible. The sooner this is done, the more decisively this is initiated, the greater the hope that all the liabilities attending this liquidation will be reckoned as no more than several months lost to Party work and one or two shattered reputations.

Naturally, the ideological struggle over it has not ceased. On the contrary, it has only just started. The trend of thought which came up with the policy of the state of siege was not a result of the 'inspired madness' of one powerful individual, this evil was not created by the will of a definite coterie, this trend of thought is closely linked to the entire previous development of our Party, it is the legitimate offspring, in its own way, of that very same *Iskra* which carried out undoubtedly positive work towards the unification of the Party.

I do not want to say that comrade Lenin represents, at the present time, '*Iskra*-ism' *par excellence*. On the contrary, I think that there is good reason to convict Lenin and the 'Leninists' of directly contradicting many of the 'covenants of *Iskra*'. I also think that sometimes Lenin is right when he claims that we, in one or another matter, deviated from '*Iskra*-ism' in a certain sense and at the same time, I cannot help thinking that *Iskra* was not a mechanical fusion of diverse elements, and that it represented, on the contrary, something very integral, something 'cast from the one block'.

The fact is that '*Iskra*-ism' represents a definite form of the application of principles and in this sense it represents the application of the 'unchanging' principles of revolutionary Social Democracy to the changing goals of the practical policy of a continuously developing Party. In so far as this tendency

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It remains to add that we did not draw any comfort from the following issues (53, 54 and 55) and that we still adhere to this judgement.

January 1904.

This indefatigable committee wants, it seems, to go one better than the entire Majority. This leaves us only to express regret that the Saratov comrades, clearly (and, moreover, in a sufficiently peculiar manner), having become familiarised with the ideas of revolutionary socialism only recently, communicate so freely with terms such as 'opportunism'. We also do not lose hope that the efforts of the Saratov comrades to save the Party from the threatening plague of opportunism issuing from the pillars of *Iskra* do not use up all their strength and that at the same time they will pay some sort of attention to the needs of the local proletariat [Martov's footnote].

applied a method of criticising Party activity drawn from these basic principles to a struggle with trends that obstructed the development of the Party, it was always correct and it remains correct now (on the whole, of course). But the concrete answers, given with the help of this method to concrete questions put forward by Party development – these answers, by necessity *a priori*, had only a relative value and became untrue, or at best one-sided, the moment that Party development took even one step forward. Meanwhile, the special tendency, '*Iskra*-ism', which grew in proportion to the victory of the revolutionary tendency in our Party, incorporating not only certain 'unchanging' premises, not only certain still more absolute methods, but also fixed concrete answers to practical questions of Party life – the further this basic tendency went, all the more stereotyped it became, it lagged all the more behind constantly developing reality ... As the Party Congress approached, '*Iskra*-ism' positively began to hold up the development of the Party. The schism within the '*Iskra*-ites' unexpectedly revealed to them how the basic form of revolutionary Social Democratism had outlived itself.<sup>128</sup> Within the framework of normal Party work which was created for better or for worse by Congress, this fact was very soon confirmed by the crushing of the policy of the state of siege.

It is therefore necessary to remember that *Iskra*-ism, as a basic tendency of practical activity, could not but reflect onto itself all the consequences of that disparity between our current forces and the tasks objectively standing before us as Social Democrats, and which are revealed to us through theoretical inquiry, a disparity which had left its impression on all the preceding tendencies of Russian Social-Democratic thought. The vulgarisation and simplification of the *Iskra*-ite idea appeared as a result of forced adaptation to the squalor of our reality, and contributed much to the onset of the crisis we are currently passing through, much promoting our, if you like, 'enlightenment'.

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128 They ask me: 'if I understood this, its "relativity" in the sense indicated above at the moment of the glorious zenith of "*Iskra*-ism"?' Yes, I understood, as with the other *Iskra*-ites who did not follow Lenin, I expected a unification of the Party achieved with the help of *Iskra* to make possible a painless transition from the concretely-embodied '*Iskra*-ism' to Social Democratism liberated from all circle-features. Our estimations were not realised and consequently we made mistakes in these estimates, which did not take certain factors into account. In this error of calculation lies the 'justification' for the tactics of the *Iskra* minority at Congress and the explanation of their, if you like, lack of consistency, or at any rate, their indecisiveness. If an 'uprising' against Leninism had started among us half a year earlier, the hope of a painless elevation of the Party to a high level would not have been in vain. Of course, it is not for us to judge here how far we are guilty in this regard (guilty of a lack of far-sightedness) and how much 'circumstances beyond our control' acquit us [Martov's footnote].

It was natural that the first rebuff had to be given to those same vulgarising attempts, in so far as this struggle had first of all to be waged on the plane of *Iskra*-ism, in a sphere significantly restricted by the above-noted specific, historically conditioned character of this tendency. On this plane, a struggle at the Party Congress and at the Congress of the League was waged; on this plane, 'underground' literature, to use Lenin's elegant terminology, circulated, literature which was brought into being by Congress. Plekhanov's article 'Something about the "Economists"' (*Iskra*, No. 53)<sup>129</sup> and the articles of Axelrod in Nos. 55 and 57<sup>130</sup> in particular, represented the first attempts to pose the question itself in a broader manner and to give a more profound critique of our Party activity. A further 'review' of the results of the 'liquidation of the third period' remains to be done, and occupation with this task remains more or less essential for all Party workers, for we cannot hold back if practice shows that not everything came out successfully in this liquidation. The current state of Party affairs can hardly be considered a sign of success. This is not what we expected from the Second Congress! And only the most hopeless simplifier or the most unprincipled intriguer could for long explain these unexpected results to himself and others by the tiny fact that Martov strayed from the line of 'hard *Iskra*-ism', or the fact that the main figure in the former 'Organising Committee' – comrade Stein – worked out, and tried to implement, some sort of hellish plan to ruin *Iskra* and, during the implementation of this plan, demoralised the 'soft' elements of this unfortunate group. Even comrade Lenin has not managed to feed his reader with such old wives' tales for some time, and the question about the real reasons for the failure now stands before us in all seriousness.

It is necessary to pose this question and to answer it by utilising those positive results which the epoch of 'the liquidation of the third period' left us – first and foremost, by the method of revolutionary Marxism adapted to the questions of practical activity. We should pose this question practically, that is, direct all our work towards filling in the omissions of *Iskra*-ism, towards the removal of its undoubtedly negative sides, towards the further development of the positive, if we do not want this critical work to be undertaken by people who are not entirely inspired by the principles of 'orthodoxy', if we do not want it to be carried out by a mass of 'practicals' in an unsystematic and empirical manner, by people who are driven to it by the demands of everyday struggle. If we do not take this work upon ourselves, it will be done without us, in spite of us and in spite of the 'eternal', absolute values of *Iskra*-ism; that is,

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<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 20.

<sup>130</sup> Aksel'rod 1903.

it will be conducted in the spirit and in the interests of opportunism. 'Not one step back!' should be the slogan of this critical work. But in order for it to have its effect, we have to go forward.

This work requires the harmonious efforts of all serious Party figures. The framework created by the Second Congress of the Party is sufficiently broad to make this 'collaboration' possible, despite the different starting points of different comrades which has been revealed. So that, within this framework, our urgent and pressing task starts to be fulfilled in reality – for this, the removal of all obstacles is first of all required, obstacles created by the first steps down the road of the state-of-siege policy, a policy absolutely incompatible with the normal functioning of the Party.

We saw that the CC, at the *denouement* of the 'tragicomedy' with the League, did not venture to draw all the necessary conclusions from the obvious bankruptcy of its regime of 'exceptional measures'. This task still stands before it now, if it wants to protect the unity of the Party that is entrusted to it. For certain elements, some of whom created the state of siege whereas others took shape in its atmosphere, by their very nature could not but impede positive work and could not but strive towards a sharpening of the purely-organisational war. Not long after the conflict with the League was settled, comrade Lenin demanded the publication in No. 54 of *Iskra* of a letter, the answer to which is represented by the present pamphlet.

The editors of *Iskra* had every reason to see in the publication of this letter an attempt by comrade Lenin to hinder that *rapprochement* that had already started between the two tendencies in the Party, and which was expressed in the CC's refusal to disband the League and its rejection of an attempt at a *coup d'état* in the Council. A discussion in the press of the episode with the 'ultimatum' and the answer to it, a discussion of that moment in the development of 'our disagreements' when we stood on the eve of an open Party schism and a schism for which the CC would be responsible, could only have assisted such obstruction. The Editorial Board spoke in this sense before the foreign representative of the CC,<sup>131</sup> having invited him to clarify whether the wish of the committee to 'consign to oblivion' this sad page in our Party history, which was expressed by another of its members who was leading the official negotiations with the Opposition,<sup>132</sup> still stood. Instead of directly answering this question, he twice answered: 'I, as a representative of the CC, do not see an obstacle to writing about the CC's negotiations with the Opposition'. Given that the

131 Noskov.

132 Krzhizhanovskii.

Editorial Board needed to know whether it had the right to consider the previously concluded agreement cancelled – note, in accordance with the wishes of the CC! – it invited a representative of the CC to present himself for an official explanation at a sitting of the Editorial Board. The comrade from the CC answered the invitation sent to him: ‘Unfortunately I cannot come today for an official explanation’ and did not suggest another time for a meeting. Then the Editorial Board told Lenin that he should apply to the bureau of the CC for an answer to the question dodged in the letter of the foreign representative of the CC, and that prior to receiving this answer it was not possible to print the letter ‘Why I Left the Editorial Board’. Comrade Lenin immediately printed this letter, having forgotten to mention why the Editorial Board had not printed it and under what conditions (a positive answer from the CC to a definite question) it offered its agreement to print the Letter. When the Editorial Board published its declaration in No. 55, only then did the representative of the CC, in a letter to the Editorial Board and in a declaration sent for printing,<sup>133</sup> consider it necessary to declare that it denied the existence of the same ‘agreement’, the cancellation of which he had twice been asked about. But if there was no ‘agreement’, why did he not explain this to the Editorial Board at the appropriate time, when the board’s doubts regarding Lenin’s letter were motivated by precisely this agreement; why, when the Editorial Board, motivated by these same doubts, conditionally refused to publish Lenin’s article in a letter to him, did the comrade from the CC not hurry to dispel the ‘error’ of the Editorial Board?

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133 Here is its text:

Declaration of the Émigré Representative of the Central Committee of the RSDLP.  
The Émigré Representative of the Central Committee Declares:

- 1) that there was no agreement between the CC and the Opposition concerning the non-publication of the negotiations. The Editorial Board of the CO has made a mistake, having probably taken for an agreement the expression on the part of some member of the CC of a wish to consign to oblivion all the negotiations should full peace be concluded;
- 2) permission was given from the émigré representative of the CC to write about these negotiations not evasively, but in an entirely definite manner and, consequently, no absence of a definite answer from the émigré representative of the CC could serve as an obstacle to the publication in *Iskra* of Lenin’s letter;
- 3) up to now, we thought that the concept of a ‘secret’ printing operation had meaning only in those social organisations possessing institutions of the censorship type.

The Émigré Representative of the CC.

The present declaration is issued in a special leaflet following the refusal of the Editorial Board to print it in No. 55 of the CO [Martov’s footnote].

It was all too clear that both the demand of publication and the wish that the letter should not be published in *Iskra* were dictated by a single motive: the aim of artificially 'exciting' the dying policy of the 'state of siege'.

The Editorial Board submitted a formal protest against this disorganising and demoralising tactic of the CC member and demanded that the CC either openly and directly – as befits Social Democrats – take responsibility for this game of chance, or decisively repudiate their representative, who had been discredited on more than one occasion.

Unfortunately, we did not wait for an answer from the CC, as further events permitted us to think that a struggle with the tactic, embodied in Lenin, of the 'state of siege' on this path of 'peaceful negotiations', would prove fruitless. We are therefore publishing this pamphlet in order to familiarise the whole Party with the state of affairs and with an open appeal to the public opinion of the Party<sup>134</sup> to clear the dense atmosphere of intrigue. The events about which we speak in the pamphlets are of a highly regrettable character; they bear convincing witness to the abnormality of the current state of affairs; they give clear evidence of the specific techniques of circle-intrigue that, carried over into Party work, threaten to completely disorganise the Party, they – excuse the vulgarity – show us that intelligent people 'grow stupid' in this musty atmosphere. The facts cited here imperiously cry out for bold measures to put an end to the disorganisation which stems from the brief *bacchanalia* of the 'state of siege'. And the CC, which became the first victim of the 'state of siege', should take the initiative in these bold measures. No bureaucratic considerations about 'supporting the prestige of power', no Bonapartist argument in support of the irreversible character of decisions, in which Congress

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134 Appealing to the 'public opinion' of Party workers, I should make the following reservation: the present crisis cannot be brought to a favourable solution either with formal resolutions or with 'imperious' but senseless cries 'from below': stop fighting, you are interfering with our work! No matter how understandable the cries on the part of 'practicals', exhausted by their powerlessness, no matter how natural this urge to 'have done with' the question by means of hurriedly taken resolutions – under Russian conditions – all these methods nonetheless do not liberate us from the serious, critical state of affairs. It is necessary, first and foremost, to understand this situation, to work out how it gradually took shape during the course of the development of one basic mistake on the part of entirely sincere people who are devoted to the Party – a mistake that was itself a symptom of a still uncured disease of the past that seemed to all of us to have been thoroughly liquidated. To understand this is to liberate oneself from a good part of that sediment of 'personal' enmity towards the representatives of the different sides which completely clouds one's mental outlook and threatens only the accumulation of more and more misunderstandings... [Martov's footnote].

allegedly embodied the 'will of the Party' to be possessed of some set of 'leaders' or other, should deflect it from those steps dictated to it by the interests of the Party. 'Let bygones be bygones' is what the always righteous old woman – history – will say, if in consequence of the welts through which it reveals itself to be more a victim than a perpetrator of a 'misunderstanding', our CC opens an era of normal relations between Party and workers. But this old woman, severe in her justice, will record 'the slave beats himself', if in the absence of boldness and decisiveness on the part of the CC, the disease takes on a lingering character and leads to a still sharper crisis.

Bold measures are necessary. It is necessary to liberate the Party from the nightmare of the 'state of siege', and as soon as possible. Under the present conditions, the first of these measures should be to call a conference of committees which have issued a protest against the current system for a comradely discussion of the question of reorganising the CC with the aims of turning it into a CC of the whole Party and not just of its 'victorious' half.



End of the resolution of the Kharkov Committee.<sup>135</sup>

Here in Russia we suffer not only from the absence of organised institutions (though in this area the leadership of the Organising Committee represented something much more complete than the newly created leading institutions promise); no less sharply is the insufficient unity in tactics felt. Because of this we waited with such impatience for Congress to resolve those innumerable tactical questions which life put forward.

But the compact Majority of Congress, having adopting an agenda in which questions of tactics occupied an extremely significant place, then directed itself with such avidity towards the establishment of definite forms of organisation, and so persistently directed itself towards obtaining a transfer of the centre of gravity into this area, that the majority of tactical questions had to be squeezed into one session. Thus, neither in the sphere of Party-building in general, nor on the particular question of the Party newspaper, nor in the matter of working out urgent tactical questions, did Congress prove itself equal to the occasion.

Expressing its most profound regret concerning this matter, the Kharkov Committee also expresses the hope that, in the near future, the

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<sup>135</sup> Omitted from the proofs as a result of oversight [Martov's footnote].



newly elected Party institutions will put right the still correctable mistakes of Congress.

The Kharkov Committee.

This declaration should be published after the publication of the minutes of Congress.

## Appendix I

### *Why I left the Editorial Board of Iskra (Letter to the Editorial Board of Iskra)*<sup>136</sup>

This is in no sense a personal question. This question is about the relation between the Majority and the Minority of our Party Congress, and I am obliged to answer it immediately, and openly, not only because the Majority delegates are showering me with inquiries, but also because the article, 'Our Congress', in No. 53 of *Iskra*, places the not very profound but very disruptive division among the *Iskra*-ites to which Congress led in an entirely false light.

The article sets forth the matter in such a way that no-one, even with a magnifying glass, will find in it a *single* really serious cause for the division, will see so much as a shadow of an explanation of such a phenomenon as the altered composition of the Editorial Board of the central Party newspaper, or will find even semblances of valid reasons for my departure from the board. We diverged on the question of the organisation of the Party Centres – the writer of the article says – on the question of the relation between the CO and the CC, over the method of conducting centralism, over the limits and character of a feasible and beneficial centralisation, over the harm of bureaucratic formalism.

Really? Did we not *diverge* on the question of the personal composition of the Centres, on the questions of whether we should permit a boycott of these Centres, owing to dissatisfaction with the personnel elected at Congress and of whether we should permit the disorganisation of practical work and the alteration of the decisions of the Party Congress in order to please some *circle* of émigré Social Democrats of the League-majority type?

You know perfectly well, comrades, that this was exactly the case. But the great majority of the most influential and active Party workers do not know it

136 This letter to the Editorial Board was sent by me to *Iskra* immediately after the appearance of No. 53. The Editorial Board refused to publish it in No. 54 and I was forced to issue it as a separate leaflet [Lenin's footnote].

yet, and so I shall briefly outline the basic facts – briefly because, judging by an announcement in No. 53 of *Iskra*, the material relating to the history of our divergence will soon be published in full.<sup>137</sup>

At our Congress – as both the author of the article with which we are occupied and the Bund delegation in their only just published report correctly point out – there was a significant majority of *Iskra*-ites, about three-fifths of the votes by my calculation, even prior to the departure of the Bund and *Rabochee Delo* delegates. During the first half of the Congress, these *Iskra*-ites acted together in concert against all the anti-*Iskra*-ites and inconsistent *Iskra*-ites. This quite graphically showed itself in two incidents that took place during the first half of the Congress, which are important for an understanding of our divergence: the incident with the OC and the equality of languages incident (the only occasion the compact majority of *Iskra*-ites dropped, from three-fifths, down to one half).<sup>138</sup> During the second half of the Congress, the *Iskra*-ites began to diverge, and had completely diverged by the end of it. The debates about §1 of the Party rules and the election of the Centres clearly show the character of this divergence: a minority of the *Iskra*-ites (with Martov at their head) rally around themselves a steadily growing number

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137 The front-page leading article of *Iskra* No. 53, a fairly terse summary of the work and main outcomes of the Second RSDLP Congress, was written by a representative of the Central Committee, who noted the departure of the Bund from the RSDLP, the approval of the new Party programme and constitution, the dissolution of numerous groups in the RSDLP such as the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and the Union Abroad, and the election of a new Party leadership, though the names of the elected individuals were not given. In this article, the Central Committee member noted the forthcoming publication of the stenographic record of the meeting, which was being prepared by a special commission elected by the Congress itself. The forthcoming appearance of a shorter pamphlet detailing the main documents, resolutions and decisions of the Congress was also announced.

138 For an account of this incident, see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 224–30; Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 223–9, 303–4. It amounted to a lengthy and pedantic discussion, the 'substance' of which was whether the Party's demand for equality before the law and opposition to legal discrimination should apply to those speaking minority languages as well as to religious, racial, national minorities and to women. In fact, all were evidently in agreement that it should, but the *Iskra-Zaria* programme included the appropriate statement in a separate paragraph. This arrangement of the text led to a very confused theoretical discussion in which Bund delegates tried to rearrange the draft. According to Lenin, 16 votes were held before a wording of the paragraphs was found that was acceptable to a majority. He cites this chaotic situation as evidence of the lack of discipline and political stability among a section of the pro-*Iskra* delegates at the Congress who, had they acted and voted in concert, would have been able to prevent such a lengthy, but largely meaningless, debate.

of non-*Iskra* and indecisive elements, who stand against the majority of the *Iskra*-ists (amongst whom are Plekhanov and myself). On §1 of the rules, this alignment has still not been moulded into its final form, but all the same, the Bundist votes and two of the three *Rabochee Delo* votes give preponderance to the *Iskra*-ist minority. In the elections to the Centres, the *Iskra*-ite majority (in consequence of the departure from Congress of the five Bundist and two *Rabochee Delo* votes) becomes the Majority at the Party Congress. And *only at this point do we separate* in the real sense of the word.

First of all, the composition of the CC profoundly divides us. Soon after the incident with the OC, at the very beginning of Congress, there are heated discussions among the *Iskra*-ites concerning the candidature of various members of the OC (and non-members) for the CC, and at unofficial meetings of the *Iskra* organisation, following long, heated debates, they reject one of the candidatures supported by Martov by nine votes to four, with three abstentions.<sup>139</sup> They adopt by 10 votes to two, with four abstentions, a list of five into which, *on my proposal*, one leader of the non-*Iskra* elements, and one leader of the *Iskra* minority,<sup>140</sup> is included. But the Minority insists on having three out of five, and as a result suffers complete defeat at the Party Congress. The great battle at the Congress on the question of the endorsement of the old six, or the election of a new trio to the Editorial Board of the CO, ends in the same way.<sup>141</sup>

*Only from this moment* does the divergence become so complete that it suggests the idea of a split; only from this moment does the Minority (which has by now already turned into a real 'compact' minority) start the abstention from voting hitherto unseen at the Congress. And this divergence grows all the more sharp after Congress. The discontented Minority goes over to a boycott, which lasts for months. That the accusations of bureaucratic formalism, of demanding mechanical obedience without demur and so on which sprung up from this soil are nonsense, merely representing an attempt to blame a good head for a sore one, clearly goes without saying; this is sufficiently well

139 Alexandrova.

140 Rozanov ('Popov') and Trotsky.

141 In view of the immense quantity of rumours and falsehood excited by this notorious 'trio', I will note here that my commentary on the draft *Tagesordnung* of Congress was known to all comrades with whom I was in any kind of close contact long before Congress. In this commentary, which was passed from hand to hand at Congress, we can find: 'Congress elects three individuals to the Editorial Board of the CO and three to the CC. These six individuals together, by a two-thirds majority, supplement, if necessary, the personnel of the Editorial Board of the CO and the CC through co-option and report accordingly to Congress. After the endorsement by Congress of this report, further co-option is carried out by the CO and CC separately [Lenin's footnote].'

illustrated by the following typical case. The new Editorial Board (Plekhanov and I) invite all the former editors to contribute, an invitation made, of course without 'formalism', by word of mouth. It gets refused. Then we write a 'document' (bureaucrats!) for the 'respected comrades' and ask them to contribute in general, and in particular to set out *their disagreements in the pages of the publications we are editing*. We receive a 'formal' announcement of their unwillingness to play any part in *Iskra*. For months on end, none of the non-editors do any work for *Iskra*. Relations become exclusively formal and bureaucratic – but on whose 'initiative'?

The creation of underground literature begins, literature which infests the emigration; it is forwarded round the committees, and is now already in some measure starting to return from Russia to the emigration. The report of the Siberian delegate,<sup>142</sup> --n's letter on the slogans of the 'opposition'<sup>143</sup> and Martov's *Once More in the Minority* are all full of the most amusing charges of 'autocracy', of instituting a Robespierre-ist reign of terror (*sic!*), of having arranged the political burial of old comrades (this non-election to the Centres is a burial!) and so on, against Lenin. In the course of events, the Opposition acquire the habit of seeking out differences of 'principle' on matters of organisation which do not permit joint work. Accordingly, they are especially wound up by the notorious 'fifth member' of the Party Council. In all the works just indicated, the Council is presented as diplomacy or a trick of Lenin's, a tool for the repression of the Russian CC by the émigré CO – just as, point for point, the delegation of the Bund portrayed the matter in their report of the Congress. It goes without saying that this principled disagreement is just as much nonsense as the notorious bureaucratic formalism: Congress elects the fifth member; consequently, the issue is reduced to that of which *person* deserves the greatest trust of the majority; and the will of the majority of a Party Congress will always reveal itself in the selection of definite individuals, however the central Party bodies are constituted.

How widely this kind of literature has been circulated abroad is evident from the fact that even the good Parvus has gone on a campaign against the attempt to unite all threads in the one hand and to 'give orders' (*sic!*) to workers from some Geneva-like place or other.<sup>144</sup> Let a month or two pass and our new enemy of autocracy will read the minutes of the Party and League

142 Trotsky s.d. [1903].

143 This is the letter of Fedor Dan printed in Appendix III to the pamphlet.

144 *Aus der Weltpolitik*, V. Jahrgang, No. 48, November 30, 1903 [Lenin's footnote].

Congresses and will be convinced that it is easy to become ridiculous whilst accepting every kind of *Parteiklatsch*<sup>145</sup> at face value.

The *apogee* of the Opposition's military action against the Centres proved to be the Congress of the League. From its minutes, the reader will see whether or not those who called it an arena for settling the scores of the Party Congress were right, and whether or not there was something in the onslaught of the Opposition that provoked the Central Committee into exceptional measures (as the CC itself put it when alteration of the personnel of the Editorial Board gave hope of peace being established in the Party). The resolutions of this Congress show what sort of character the 'principled' differences on the question of autocratic bureaucracy had.

The atmosphere of a split came down so threateningly after the Congress of the League that Plekhanov decided to co-opt the old Editorial Board. I predicted that the Opposition would not be satisfied with this and considered it impossible to alter the decision of a Party Congress to please a *circle*. But still less did I consider it permissible to stand in the way of a possible peace within the Party, and I therefore left the Editorial Board after No. 51 of *Iskra*, having announced that I would not refuse to contribute, and that I would not even insist on the publication of the fact of my exit if a good peace were established in the Party. The Opposition demanded (not the transformation of the non-existent system of bureaucracy, formalism, autocracy, mechanism and so on, but) the restoration of the old Editorial Board, the co-option of opposition representatives to the Central Committee, two places on the Council, and the recognition of the League Congress as lawful. The Central Committee offered to ensure peace by agreeing to the co-option of two comrades to the CC, to handing over one place on the Council and to the gradual reorganisation of the League. The Opposition rejected these conditions too. The Editorial Board was co-opted, but the question of peace remained open. That was the state of affairs when No. 53 of *Iskra* appeared.

It is scarcely permissible to doubt that the Party wants peace and positive work. But articles like 'Our Congress' prevent the establishment of peace because they bring up hints and fragments of questions which are not, and cannot, be comprehensible separate from a full account of all the vicissitudes of the divergence, because they shift the blame from an émigré circle onto our practical centre, which is engaged in the difficult and laborious task of actually uniting the Party, and which apart from this has met, and will meet, with too many hindrances on the road to implementing centralism. The committees in Russia are conducting a struggle against the Minority's disorganising

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145 'Party gossip' (German).

activities and boycott, which is holding up all our work. Resolutions to this effect have already been sent by the St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Tver, Odessa, and Tula committees and from the Northern Union.

Enough of our émigré *Literatengezänk*!<sup>146</sup> Let it now serve as an example to the practical workers in Russia of '*what is not to be done!*' Let the Editorial Board of the Party's CO call on everybody to put an end to every boycott, no matter on whose part, and summon them to concerted work under the leadership of the CC of the Party!

'And what of the difference in shades of opinion among the *Iskra*-ites?', the reader will ask. First of all, we will answer, the difference is that, in the opinion of the Majority, one can and should promote one's views in the Party independently of any alteration in the personnel of the Centres. Every circle, even of *Rabochee Delo*-ists, has the right, on entering the Party, to demand the opportunity to express and promote its views; but no circle, not even of generals, is justified in demanding representation in the Party Centres. Secondly, the difference is that, in the opinion of the Majority, the blame for any formalism and bureaucracy falls on those who, by refusing to work under the leadership of the Centres, made it difficult to run things in a non-formalistic way. Thirdly, I know of one, *and only one*, difference of principle on organisational questions; namely, that difference which was expressed in the debates on §1 of the Party rules. We shall endeavour to return to this question when the minutes of the Congress appear. We will then show that Martov's formulation was carried with the help of *non-Iskra* and quasi-*Iskra* elements not by accident, but because it took a step towards opportunism, and that we see this step even more graphically in – n's letter and in *Once More in the Minority*.<sup>147</sup> The minutes will show the factual untruth of the opinion of the author of 'Our Congress', who alleges 'the controversy during the discussion of the Party rules centred almost exclusively round the organisation of the central institutions of the Party'. Quite the contrary. The only really principled controversy that divided the two 'sides' (the Majority and Minority of the *Iskra*-ists) to any definite degree was the argument over §1 of the Party rules. As for the arguments over the composition of the Council, co-option to the central bodies and so on, they remained arguments between individual delegates, between Martov and myself and others. These arguments touched on what were, by compari-

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146 'Literary squabbles' (German).

147 Then we will also ask for an explanation of the meaning of the hints in the article, 'Our Congress', concerning undeserved disregard for the non-*Iskra*-ites and of the non-correspondence of the strictness of the rules to the real balance of forces within the Party. What do these hints relate to? [Lenin's footnote].

son, very minor details, which did not give rise to any definite alignment of *Iskra* supporters, who with their votes put right first one, then another of our excesses. To reduce disagreements on questions of the method of implementing centralism, its limits and its character to these arguments means simply to whitewash the position of the Minority and the methods of the fight they conducted for a change in the personnel of the Centres, which alone provoked a divergence among us in the full sense of the word.

N Lenin

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*From the Editorial Board*<sup>148</sup>

Jupiter, you are angry . . .

Comrade N Lenin has published a 'Letter to the Editorial Board of *Iskra*' on the theme: 'why I left the Editorial Board'. In the opinion of the author, this question bears not only a personal character, and comrade Lenin considered it his duty to speak to the public about it. This was the right of comrade Lenin, and the Editorial Board would have considered itself obliged to publish his letter in *Iskra* if comrade Lenin had not touched on those facts from the organisational life of the Party relative to which an agreement had been concluded between the CC of the Party and a group of its members (included among whom are four of the editors of *Iskra*), at the suggestion of the former, to 'consign them to oblivion'. Therefore the Editorial Board, before making up its mind to print the letter of comrade Lenin, asked the émigré representative of the CC whether or not the wish to 'consign to oblivion' the facts touched upon by comrade Lenin, a wish communicated to the aforementioned members of the Party, still stood. Having received an answer to this question, which cannot be described as anything other than evasive, the Editorial Board informed comrade Lenin that he should appeal directly to the CC and to print the letter only when the CC officially took upon itself responsibility for the publication of information from the sphere of practical affairs which, by its very essence, was not intended to be public knowledge. In spite of this warning, comrade Lenin immediately published his letter, and the aforementioned member of the CC allowed it to

148 Though it is not stated by Martov, this reply to Lenin was almost certainly written by Plekhanov in his capacity as the sole remaining editor of *Iskra* following Lenin's resignation. It also appears in Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 13, pp. 41–2.



be printed on the Party press (unknown to the Editorial Board of the CO) on the condition that the name of the Party did not appear on the title page of the pamphlet.

Finding this departure on the part of comrade Lenin and the foreign representative of the CC to be incorrect, and expressing its surprise as regards the fact that comrade Lenin, in speaking of a 'refusal' to print his letter, did not cite a motive for this 'refusal' (which, as the reader can see, was only precautionary, pending a clarification of the true intentions of the CC), the Editorial Board, concerning the essence of the question raised by Lenin, declared:

Lenin, in his letter refuting the article 'Our Congress' in No.53 of *Iskra*, asserts that the organisational disagreements in the Party which arose at Congress, and which have continued to manifest themselves up to the present time, have their roots in the dissatisfaction of a section of Party members with the fact that they or their friends were not elected to the central institutions and that those distinct-in-principle tendencies of organisational policy which we tried to outline in No. 53 were thought up in order to 'whitewash' the position of the Party minority, the position of people who are disorganising the Party in order to obtain 'representation' in the Centres.

With his assertion, Lenin tries to cast a moral shadow on the motives behind the actions of half of the Party and the Majority of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, reducing the struggle between two organisational tendencies which is taking place in the Party to the level of a pitiful, contemptible struggle 'for places'.

This is a matter of taste, and we do not intend to follow Lenin down this road. Incidentally, we know that he energetically fought, and fights, for a definite composition of the CC and the CO, but up to now we thought that the basis of this struggle lay in the ambition to obtain the strengthening in the Party of definite principles by these means, principles which we consider false and harmful to the Party, but which comrade Lenin acknowledges as its only salvation. We still wanted to think this after Lenin had declared his political opponents to be 'generals' who disorganised the Party for the sake of 'representation in the Centres'. We can guarantee comrade Lenin one thing: for the sake of a struggle with what, in our view, are harmful and disorganising tendencies, a representative of which he appears to be, *we will never, owing to the lack of more convincing arguments, have to appeal to the base motives of an opponent*. And we now declare: in the organ of the Party edited by us, there is no place for this sort of 'discussion' of burning Party questions which, as we

already said in No. 53, lead to darkness instead of 'light'.<sup>149</sup> We are compelled to answer the letter of comrade Lenin with a factual investigation of its 'information' and its arguments in a special pamphlet in which his remarkable 'Letter' is reprinted. We consider it obligatory to preserve the columns of *Iskra* for those who intend to discuss all questions agitating the Party whilst not reducing them, in the language of philistines, to so-called 'personalities'.

## Appendix II<sup>150</sup>

Geneva, 29 January 1904

Respected Comrade!

As regards the circumstances accompanying the departure of comrade Lenin from the Editorial Board, I can say only one thing: these circumstances have in the main evidently escaped his memory. I shall waste no time in refreshing it.

He says: 'The atmosphere of a split came down so threateningly after the Congress of the League that Plekhanov decided to co-opt the old Editorial Board'. This is not accurate. According to the rules, Plekhanov had no right to 'decide' this: co-option could only take place unanimously. I only 'decided' that the unwillingness of the Party Centres to yield was inflicting great damage on the Party and that it was therefore necessary to make timely concessions. And given that I was convinced that comrade Lenin did not agree with this, I decided to resign, something I brought to the attention of comrade Lenin. He has forgotten, or finds it unpleasant to recall this.

'I predicted', he continues, 'that the Opposition would not be satisfied with this and considered it impossible to alter the decision of a Party Congress to please a *circle*. But still less did I consider it permissible to stand in the way of a possible peace within the Party, and I therefore left the Editorial Board after No. 51 of *Iskra*, having announced that I would not refuse to contribute, and that I would not even insist on the publication of the fact of my exit if a good peace were established in the Party'.

This is again not accurate. When I told comrade Lenin that I wanted to leave the Editorial Board, not considering it possible to support, with my

149 In the article, 'Something About "Economism" and "Economists"' – see Chapter 20 of the present collection.

150 This letter was republished in Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 13, pp. 43–5.

participation in it, an unyielding policy which would lead the Party to ruin, comrade Lenin objected: 'no, it is actually better that I go, because if you go then all will say "clearly Lenin is not right if even Plekhanov has broken with him"'. The next day Lenin submitted his resignation.

Several days later, he dropped by and said that he did not in the least consider his departure from the Editorial Board to be a concession to the Minority. 'Chamberlain', he added, 'left a ministry precisely in order to strengthen his position, and so did I'. I took note of these words at the time, and since then, whenever people speak to me about the peaceable comrade Lenin, I recall Chamberlain, and when I come across the name of Chamberlain in the newspapers, I recall the peaceable comrade Lenin.<sup>151</sup>

Regarding the matter of drawing public attention to the fact of Lenin's departure from the Editorial Board, here are the relevant documents:

## I

Not sharing the opinion of Plekhanov, a member of the Party Council and of the Editorial Board of the CO, that at the present moment concessions to the Martovites and the co-option of the six serve the interests of Party unity, I relinquish the duties of a member of the Party Council and a member of the Editorial Board of the CO.

N Lenin

ps Regardless of circumstances, I am not in the least refusing to offer all feasible support of the new Party institutions through my work.

## II

I also ask that you print the attached declaration in an issue of *Iskra* with the announcement about the Congress. Of course, in the case of a full peace being established in the Party (which is what I hope for), and if you find it necessary, I would be able, alongside other peace conditions, to discuss the non-publication of this declaration.

Yours devotedly,  
Lenin

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<sup>151</sup> Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) was a highly influential British Liberal politician. In 1886 he resigned from Gladstone's government in opposition to the latter's support for Irish Home Rule. He later formed a 'Liberal Unionist' grouping to oppose this policy.

18 November<sup>152</sup>

Text of the declaration: 'To the editors of the CO of the RSDLP – R[espected] C[omrades]! I ask that you print the following declaration in *Iskra*:

'N Lenin from 1 November (new style) 1903 is no longer a part of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*'.

With S-D greetings,

N Lenin

Personally, it did not seem to me for a minute to be an important question whether or not the reading public would find out about the departure of comrade Lenin, but the last lines of the second letter indicated to me that comrade Lenin himself ascribed great significance to this question and was ready to concede his silence about it for the appropriate equivalent. I was amazed at this, and began with regret to think that he had in part acquired the habits of those people with whom he was fighting in No. 50 of *Iskra*, in the article 'Minimum Logic and Maximum Brazenness'.<sup>153</sup> I do not consider it necessary to buy his silence. That is all I am able to tell you at the moment. I believe that it is enough to very significantly supplement and correct what was said by comrade Lenin.

One more thing. The behaviour of comrade Lenin makes you indignant. In my opinion you are too strict with him. I think that much of the strangeness of his actions can simply be explained by the fact that he is completely lacking a sense of humour.

Devotedly yours,

G Plekhanov

ps You yourself know very well that the co-option carried out by me does not contradict the decision of Congress, which in the rules adopted by

<sup>152</sup> Old Style – 5 November in the Gregorian calendar.

<sup>153</sup> This refers to the Bund. See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 59–65. The article deals with the Bund's two organisational resolutions to the Second Congress of the RSDLP and the 'binding' character of the delegates' instructions, which ensured the latter's departure from the Congress once the latter voted to amend the second resolution.

it, grants the Editorial Board the right to supplement its personnel at its own discretion.

## Appendix III

### *From the 'Underground' Literature of the Minority*

Comrade Lenin mentions an 'underground' literature which arose in a period lasting from the Congress to the appearance of *Iskra* No. 53. As comrade Trotsky has already explained, this literature had to remain 'underground' so long as an official statement about the Congress did not appear. At the present moment, there is not the least basis for it remaining under wraps.

There are three 'underground' documents of the Minority: the first is the already published 'Report of the Siberian Delegation'. The second is my article 'Once More in the Minority', a copy taken from the proofs of which has been circulated abroad: from this is it obvious that it was but a day away from being published. I was only awaiting the appearance of a statement about the Congress in order to publish it immediately as the programme of literary activity of the new literary group. The energy of comrade Lenin in the development of the 'state of siege' ensured that we entered the Editorial Board of the *CO* prior to the appearance of the statement about the Congress. I reworked the article, getting rid of everything from it that touched on the literary plans of the separate group, supplementing the article so that space was given to those results of the Congress which it was necessary to refer to in the central Party newspaper. This was not possible without the softening of certain polemical expressions, but the essence of the article remained the same. This is how the editorial in No. 53 of *Iskra* ('Our Congress') came about. If comrade Lenin sees in the article, 'Once More in the Minority', something deserving of special attention at the current time, I permit him to print this article.

I considered it necessary to append to this pamphlet the letter of comrade Dan – the third document of the 'underground literature'. It should indicate why many who had nothing in common with that 'struggle for portfolios' which – according to Lenin – united us, joined the Minority formed at Congress. This letter shows the attitude which *Iskra*-ites who had participated in *Iskra*'s military campaign from the very beginning, but who did not personally see all the phases immediately preceding the Congress, were obliged to take towards the 'state of siege' created by this Congress. I would say '*Iskra*-ites' of that period when '*Iskra*-ism' was still only the slogan of the pro-

gressive development of the Party. Comrade Dan has the right more than anybody else to speak of this period of *Iskra*-ism. One can say that from the first day he occupied an influential position in our organisation, and that alongside Lenin, he was the leader of the majority of the *Iskra*-ites at the émigré unity Congress of 1901 (the minority, with Plekhanov at its head – I was among its number – inclined towards agreement with the Union even after No. 10 of *Rabochee Delo*).<sup>154</sup> As a leader, he was given the assignment of composing the text of the principled declaration stating the motives for our departure from the Congress. Later, comrade Dan was delegated by the Editorial Board of *Iskra* to represent its opinions at the projected Second Congress of the Party in March 1902, which was converted into a conference. Comrade Dan was assigned the task of securing the formation of the Organising Committee for the preparation of Congress by the Editorial Board, a task he successfully carried out.<sup>155</sup>

I am citing all this information in order to show how competent comrade Dan was to define that organisational line which in practice guided the *Iskra* organisation. In this connection, he is no less competent than comrade Lenin. And the guilt is not his if he, having returned after one-and-a-half year's 'absence' to the *Iskra* midst, finds that the policy of the 'state of siege' is not an *Iskra* policy, as the great majority of those working during the course of 1901–2 remembered it.

L.M.

### *Preface*

In printing my 'Letter', I find it necessary to preface it with several explanatory remarks.

154 Krupskaya remembers this episode somewhat differently: she recalls Martov playing a most aggressive role in the debates, whilst Plekhanov was pleased with the split. See Krupskaya 1930, p. 44.

155 In fact, this description seems to exaggerate Dan's 'successes' quite significantly. Dan was arrested shortly after the Belostock Conference of 1902, as were the majority of its participants. He was subsequently exiled and this explains his 'absence' from the later stages of *Iskra*'s work that is alluded to in this passage. The Organising Committee did not really start to function until November, once *Iskra* had built up its somewhat depleted forces in key areas such as St. Petersburg, Moscow and the smaller towns near Moscow, whose Social-Democratic groups had united to form the Northern Union. Moreover, it seems that Dan's commission was mainly to convey proposals made by Lenin to the Belostock meeting (see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 97–106). Perhaps because of this, Dan himself is evasive about this episode in his own history of the period in question. See Dan 1964, p. 235.

Having left the *Iskra* group firmly united, in the thick of a struggle with *Rabochee Delo* and at the very beginning of its 'All-Russian' conquest, I returned after a one-and-a-half-year absence to find it – completely unexpectedly – in a state of sharp discord and internecine war. However lamentable this fact was for me – and not only in the Party sense – it was nonetheless necessary to reckon with it.

My sojourn 'out of action' did not entirely deprive me of the possibility of familiarising myself somewhat with the Party literature published at this time and of engaging in conversations – mainly on organisational questions – with my comrades, who held the most varied opinions in relation to matters agitating the Russian Social Democracy: here were Bundists, *Rabochee Delo*-ists and my co-thinkers – the old *Iskra*-ites. I say 'old', because I happen to meet a type, entirely new to me, of 'young *Iskra*-ites'. This type, which emerged at a time when *Iskra* ideas did not have to conquer every step with a fight, but had already gained the final victory – surprised me in many respects; above all with what I would call its purely 'corporate' attitude to *Iskra* and to all things *Iskra*. For me it was entirely clear how, in this situation, circle-psychology was hindering a broad understanding of Party tasks. The 'pro-*Iskra*' people were losing sight of the Party, were *Iskra*-ites to such a degree that in many regards they stopped being Social Democrats. In a word, it was a case of *Iskra*-ites 'who were not ashamed to be *Iskra*-ites' at a time when, in my opinion, it would have been better had they been ashamed to be such *Iskra*-ites. And with these comrades we had to conduct long conversations on organisational questions, and it goes without saying that their leading ideas were the investiture of the marshal's baton in the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and the direct transfer of the leadership of practical activity into the hands of a literary board.

Thus, having returned to Party activity, I had a certain store of observations, more or less clarifying for me those forms in which *Iskra* propaganda was absorbed and reflected in the heads of many comrades. And of course, this store helped me to a significant degree in making sense, without any special difficulties, of that web of strained relations which I found on my return; having thrown off those extraneous features which unavoidably complicate every struggle, it helped me locate its principled basis.

The 'underground' literary productions, to use the refined expression of Lenin, were at that time all of two: the 'Report of the Siberian Delegation', which has since been printed, and comrade Lenin's manuscript on which was to be found, true – in another hand and in fresh ink – a superscript stating that the manuscript was intended only for the personal acquaintances of the author, and that reading it without the author's permission would be regarded



as tantamount to reading someone else's letters.<sup>156</sup> I believe I have the right to speak about this 'underground' production despite the superscript, because a broad circle of individuals have read it and I have been informed that it was only very recently read in one of the émigré groups assisting the Party, in which we find a significant number of individuals who have never looked into comrade Lenin's eyes. True, a promise was taken from the members of the group not to tell anyone about the reading. But all the same, I think that such a use of the manuscript completely deprives it of the character of a 'private letter' and that therefore comrade Lenin, who is so exercised by the printing of other people's 'underground' works, would not prevent the public from also becoming acquainted with his own 'underground' manuscript. I would be very glad if, with its printing, it became, to express it mildly... awkward, perhaps, for comrade Lenin to change anything in it. The publication of the manuscript would testify to the subtlety of comrade Lenin, a subtlety which is a little excessive when there is a question of reprinting such works as 'A Letter to a Comrade', which has previously appeared in Russia.<sup>157</sup> In case Lenin does not now have his manuscript to hand, I can oblige him with a copy of it which, by happy coincidence, was also recently 'returned' to me.<sup>158</sup>

Returning to the interrupted narrative, familiarity with these 'underground' works and conversations with members of the old Editorial Board of *Iskra*, including comrade Lenin, who – and this should testify to his honour – did not once try to hint at the idea that 'the Minority was trying to whitewash its struggle over posts', but spoke about 'shades' of tendencies – this familiarisation and these conversations were entirely sufficient for me to, if not adopt, as it were, a new attitude towards one side or the other, then to define whose views my own agreed with. I considered my opinion to be *Iskra*-ite and, for the whole period of my standing aside from Party work, I did not experience any crisis in them. I was all the more convinced of the *Iskra* character of my opinion by the fact that, despite my complete separation from that group of comrades with whom I earlier found myself in close contact, and the necessity

156 This is the 'Account of the Second Congress of the RSDLP' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 15–34).

157 *A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks* was composed in September 1902 but was first published as a pamphlet early in 1904. It was released with a preface and postscript that discussed the ongoing conflict between the groups around Martov and Lenin. (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 347–527 and Vol. 7, pp. 131–8).

158 Here, Dan appears to boast that he was involved in the unauthorised distribution of Lenin's 'Account of the Second Congress'.

of therefore, at my own risk, independently developing these opinions and adapting them to the changing circumstances of Party life, and of evaluating its various events, despite all this I found myself to be in solidarity with the majority of the old Editorial Board of *Iskra* and the majority of those practical comrades who were the most outstanding figures of the *Iskra* organisation during the period in which I took part in its work, in all controversial organisational questions, often right down to the details. It is of course possible, together with comrade Lenin, to confer the title '*Iskra*' only on one's own personal opinions in precisely that form in which one personally developed them. But how far this is logical is another question. One fact remains, however. The *Iskra* group proceeded from one common set of ideas in the organisational question; in the development of these ideas, however, the previously united group separated along the lines of various, in part completely opposing, tendencies. Consequently, if it is possible to confer on anything the incontrovertible title '*Iskra*-ite', then it is obviously on the set of organisational ideas which were, at the beginning, shared by all the *Iskra*-ites.

And so I found myself in solidarity with the Minority. From the 'underground' literature, the stronger impression – in the negative sense – was produced on me by the manuscript of Lenin. In it was so clearly and unambiguously expressed that 'corporative' circle-psychology which I had already observed among the 'young *Iskra*-ites', and the events of Party life in general, and in particular the events which took place at the Party Congress were evaluated from such a narrow and worthless point of view that the only thing I could say to Lenin on reading it was to advise him to destroy it, or at the very least not give it to anyone to read. Unfortunately, my friendly advice to comrade Lenin was not put to use. The reader can already see that in giving this advice, I was guided by nothing other than friendly feeling towards comrade Lenin from the fact that now, when it seems to me that comrade Lenin can no longer abandon that position on which he has taken his stand, a position which is fundamentally mistaken in my opinion and which he will defend with all his peculiar energy, now, considering his position harmful and, should it triumph, nothing less than fatal to our Party, I see one of the best means of struggle against the 'Leninists' in the publication of this manuscript.

Having familiarised myself with the idea of a separation of the *Iskra*-ites at Congress, I wrote a letter about the reasons for this split to a comrade from another town. With this I fulfilled a promise I had made to him. The fact is, the very rumours about discord, about the happenings at Congress, about the reasons for the disagreement, circulated at that time in such a vague and indefinite form that for a person standing to some degree distant from the main

arena of struggle, and who was not at that time satisfied by explanations of a purely personal, anecdotal character, it was extremely difficult, almost impossible, to work out what the matter was actually all about. And at that time, the wish to know the real reasons for the separation and the principled basis for the disagreement was so strong that every hint at an explanation, every attempt to unpick the tangle of sharpening relations was snatched up greedily. The fact that my letter, which bears the character of a genuinely personal communication, quickly became a 'best-seller' in the form of a mass of handwritten copies – to a significant degree against my will – is also explained by this.<sup>159</sup>

As with the personal letter, the notes printed here have all the peculiar inadequacies belonging to correspondence in general; setting aside literary carelessness, a letter by necessity characterises a controversial matter first and foremost from the standpoint of the way the matter was formulated at the time of its writing. Many inferences drawn from the opinions of one side or the other which had then already taken shape, and which have now been clearly expressed, are not to be found in my letter because they could not be directly illustrated to everybody with the available facts. More generally, a letter cannot in the least pretend to reflect in an exhaustive fashion the full scope of the disagreement; at that time it was sufficient to indicate the principled basis of the argument about the interrelations between the CO and the CC, which was then *à l'ordre du jour*.<sup>160</sup> Thus, at present, when both the questions of the day and the very posing of them have become significantly more complex and more profound, my letter can, in many senses, only be of interest as a 'historical document', though, as regards the initial point of view and, in particular, regarding the opinion as to the currently possible and necessary relations between the CO and the CC, I do not retreat even a step from the point of view expressed in the letter. In order to avoid misunderstandings, I should emphasise the fact that the 'correct' set-up of the Party is of course correct only under current socio-political conditions. It would be a mistake to think that interrelations between the CO and the CC should everywhere and always be as they are depicted in my letter. With political freedom,

159 I note with pleasure that when I laid out the contents of the letter printed here in a communication to one of the authoritative representatives of international 'Marxist orthodoxy', I received from him an expression of 'full solidarity' with the ideas expressed by me [Dan's footnote, which may be misplaced in the original text of the pamphlet, as it appears to belong to the following paragraph in terms of its contents. He is very likely referring to Karl Kautsky].

160 'On the agenda' (French).

transparency and that broad public supervision which completes the conversion of Social Democracy from a Party predominantly guiding the masses into a real Party of the masses with an established social opinion and so forth, then the very posing of the question of the relations between the CO and the CC will of course change completely.

Two more remarks. As soon as my letter started to be more or less widely distributed, speculation began in a given camp regarding the word 'compromise' that is used in the letter. Completely ignoring the sense, repeatedly emphasised in the letter, in which 'compromise' is spoken of, they jumped at the word itself in order to tarnish the idea expressed in the letter and to make accusations of 'opportunism'. This compelled me to add a footnote to the letter, and further copies were distributed with the footnote. Naturally, rumours about 'compromise' did not stop entirely because of this, just as the idea did not cease to be attributed to me that the CC should make itself into a storage space for all tendencies, though in the letter itself I repeatedly emphasise and elaborate the completely opposite idea. This did not stop comrade Lenin from speaking at the Congress of the League about 'several *Iskra*-ites' who express 'such opinions, strange to the highest degree, that the CC should reflect every vacillation and primitive outlook in the Party in its activity'.<sup>161</sup> In view of this, I consider it necessary to emphasise here the fact that my letter only discusses the question of how the CC should put into practice its established and most progressive (in the Social-Democratic direction, of course) opinions. I think that the reader who has read the letter attentively will notice this himself.

The letter is printed without any kind of changes; only in two or three places are light stylistic corrections made.

F Dan

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In stating my opinion regarding the reasons for, and meaning of, the schism which has divided the former Editorial Board of *Iskra* into two separate groups, I will remove from consideration everything which is of an incidental, second-degree significance and dwell only on its very essence, which can be reduced – what is more, completely unexpectedly – to the fundamental divergence of the opinions of the two groups on organisational questions that was revealed at Congress. I am prompted to do this first of all so as to not to spin out my exposi-

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<sup>161</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 78.

tion, and also by the impossibility of representing all the disagreements more or less clearly prior to the publication of the minutes of the Congress.

In order to understand the basic disagreement of the groups, it is necessary first of all to clearly restore to one's memory those organisational principles which the *Iskra* organisation advocated in its literature and implemented in its practical activity; approaching the views being put into practice by each of the two groups at the current moment with this criterion, we will without difficulty determine the opinions of which of the sides distinguish themselves from those we habitually consider to be '*Iskra*' and on which of the sides we ourselves should stand, assuming of course that our own opinions on this question have not changed.

I will attempt, in a few short lines, to sketch out these organisational principles. We all adhered to the view that the calling of a Congress and the formal unification of the Party was desirable and useful only once the real elements for actual, and not only paper unity, had been created; when the ideological unity of Russian Social Democracy had been attained to a sufficient degree, when strong local organisations with firm links to the working masses had been created and so forth. Without these conditions, the calling of a Congress and the formation of a CC and so on would seem to be undesirable because only the earlier predominance of fiction over reality would be secured by these means, the earlier satisfaction with purely verbal formulae and noisy appellations which lacked any real basis would be legalised; this would have upheld the previous ideological disorder, the previous instability and vacillation dependent on all accidental fluctuations in the economic and political atmosphere. Of course, the ideological unity and firmness of the local organisations and the broad political character of their activity, which creates the real basis and conditions for real unity, could not and cannot attain a degree of absolute completion; but reaching a definite point on the road to this unattainable completion was assumed to be necessary both for the calling of a Congress and for formal unification to be desirable. Conversely: calling a Congress on the initiative and with the immediate participation of *Iskra* was to be regarded as an indicator of the fact that, in the opinion of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and comrades who were acting in close agreement with them, the necessary degree of ideological unity, organisation and political maturity had already been attained, a degree which already made both possible and desirable the formal strengthening of Party unity and the proper functioning of the Party.

But, starting from this position, we should also recognise the necessity of the full application of the rest of our principles to the organisation of the Party. Here, first of all, strict centralisation is pertinent; all local organisations should

be linked to the CC by strong threads, which is the real (not only on paper) supreme leader of the Party. In our view, and this has been emphasised more than once, the CC should not only be the technical bureau of the Party which unites all Party functions in regard to transport, press and the distribution of literature, contacts and so on, but also the real political leadership of the Party, capable of independently and, on its own initiative, taking upon itself the colossal task of unifying and directing the whole class struggle of the all-Russian proletariat waged under the immediate leadership of local organisations; a leadership which is capable of developing the revolutionary energy of the Party up to the highest maximum obtainable at the present moment. This presentation of the issue of the CC has two sides. On the one hand it involves the necessity of forming the CC from the most conscious, politically mature and energetic revolutionaries, who for their part do everything they can to give the greatest possible Social-Democratic character to all the activity of the Party and to every struggle of a proletariat which is guided by and closely linked to it. On the other, it includes the recognition of the fact that the degree to which the movement guided by the CC is revolutionary and genuinely Social-Democratic will be unavoidably limited by the still relatively low (though still recognised as sufficient for the unification of the Party) degree of political maturity and Social-Democratic consciousness of the practical comrades active in Russia, and by the still lower degree of development of the class-consciousness of the Russian proletariat. This distinction between that towards which the CC should strive from the point of view of strict Social-Democratic demands and that which it will be able to achieve under the objective conditions of Party reality, conditions which are not dependent on it, should not be lost sight of for a moment. Undoubtedly, the CC should be obliged to try to invest every phenomenon of Party life with a strict Social-Democratic form – we should demand this of it. But it is equally beyond question that the CC, by force of necessity, will have to reckon with the present level of understanding among the committees, with the degree of their Social-Democratic consciousness, and the fact that no-one, including the CC, has the power to compel the Party to be higher than it is in reality. In order not to hang in the air, to avoid returning to a fiction, to avoid reducing its leading and unifying role to verbal formulae alone, the CC will unavoidably have to resort to a series of political compromises provoked by the actual state of the Party; moreover, its task will be reduced to that of achieving the maximum revolutionary and Social-Democratic character of the movement possible in its current state.<sup>162</sup> And

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<sup>162</sup> For those nervous people, in whom the word 'compromise' provokes the type of epileptic fit that was not provoked by the still so recent compromises practised by these same

the lower the level of political maturity and Social-Democratic consciousness on the part of the revolutionary-practicals (and on this account we, only yesterday having experienced an orgy of 'Economism' and handicraft methods, should not delude ourselves that all of them are now *Iskra*-ites), the lower the level of the proletariat's class-consciousness, the more unavoidable, frequent and significant these practical compromises will be, the more unavoidable will be this separation between that which should be, from our point of view, that towards which we should strive with all our strength, and that which is. But under such conditions, all the more necessary becomes the existence of a newspaper led by individuals with firmly established Social-Democratic views, a newspaper independent of all the occasional fluctuations of the mood and opinions of the Party, a newspaper which freely and openly criticises all the deviations of the Party from a strict Social-Democratic 'line', thus highlighting the 'compromising' character of the actual course of the movement, and which through this continuously facilitates growth in the political education and the class consciousness of the proletariat and its leaders and, consequently, facilitates the ever closer assimilation of a strictly Social-Democratic content

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people in the sphere of principles, we consider it necessary to make a note which earlier, in view of all our preceding indications, seemed to us superfluous. An *Iskra*-ite, having entered into a *Rabochee Delo*-ist committee with the goal of 'conquering' it – a phenomenon which, as is well-known, was practised on the very broadest scale – without doubt frequently, when he ended up in the Minority, had to resort to practical compromises in the sense that he participated on his own initiative in activities of the committee, which did not fully correspond to his *Iskra* principles but which did not contradict them and were as it were, a stage on the road from *Rabochee Delo*-ism to *Iskra*-ism. This, it goes without saying, did not in the least deliver him from the responsibility of embracing *Iskra* principles in all their clarity and it did not give nervous people reason to fall into a swoon of the type they never fell into when reading the programme-minimum of the RSDLP, which also represents its own type of 'compromise' with current activity, but a 'compromise' not only failing to stand in contradiction to the final goals and basic principles of the Party, but, on the contrary, constituting in the same way a 'stage' on the road from that sad reality to the shining reign of our ideals. Of course, it is clear to any unprejudiced reader that the text speaks only of this type of 'compromises' on the part of the CC, compromises provoked by objective conditions of Party activity that are independent of it. Indeed, the whole idea of the present passage is that the CC, when entering organisations (as with our *Iskra*-ites), which are far from completely *Iskra*, should try to 'conquer' them and to subordinate them to their 'strict-*Iskra*' tendency gradually, 'nicely' and not with all the 'plagues of Egypt' – with bans, exclusions, closures and so forth, and should not order such activity which – given the current 'level' of the committees – will remain unperformed, so that as a matter of course it can only compromise the CC, give rise to a heap of conflicts and undermine trust in the very idea of centralisation [Dan's footnote].



to Party policy. All the more necessary becomes a newspaper that is not forced to rely at every moment on the approval of the majority of members of the Party, as if from its point of view this majority was never mistaken, an organ which is capable in case of necessity of countering political immaturity, narrowness in the understanding of revolutionary tasks and casual fluctuations in the mood of this majority with its firm and unswerving Social-Democratic point of view and Social-Democratic criticism.

From this it is clear how the highest institutions of the Party should have been constituted, from the *Iskra* point of view: a powerful CC, subordinate to nobody but tightly linked to the local organisations, and an independent CO placed in conditions which would entirely guarantee (not only formally, but morally) full freedom of expression of its opinion and criticism, but from its side claiming only ideological influence on the Party, belonging to the Party only in the sense that the Party in general would recognise its opinions as its own and that in the organ an 'official', as it were, department for all the publications of the CC would be opened. That is the type of organisational form which should have put an end to the 'state of siege' in the Party and should have brought about the proper functioning of it.

We will now see how much this *Iskra* point of view corresponds to the position created by the majority at the Congress on the initiative and under the leadership of Lenin, by a majority which in the guise of 'firm' *Iskra*-ites has placed itself in opposition to 'soft' *Iskra*-ites led by Martov and his comrades, who have retained their old organisational opinions.

A glance at the principle, at the system of organisation as it was expressed in the rules, shows a complete breakdown of the *Iskra* point of view. According to the rules, the CC is not the supreme leader of the practical political activity of the Party because it is subordinated to a rank higher than itself. And this rank is not the majority of committees expressing their will by means of a referendum, which would still be understandable and perhaps even useful in the cause of strengthening the real links of the CC with the committees, but a Council of five people capable of cancelling the decisions of the CC. On the other hand, the CO is, in principle, made dependent on all the fluctuations in the mood and opinions of the majority of the Party because the Editorial Board is electable and, what is more, electable not as a collective with definite opinions, but from separate individuals; consequently every Congress can not only change it, guiding its opinions which, as we only recently saw in the period of *Rabochee Delo*-ism, can be not strictly-Social-Democratic, it can also throw together people diverging on the most basic questions, and who are therefore incapable of giving the organ any definite physiognomy whatsoever. Moreover:

the Editorial Board, as with the CC, is subordinate to that very same Council which can impose its veto not only in the form of an expression of opinion or in the form of criticism, but also on opinion and criticism itself. Thus, the whole significance of the newspaper as a firm and unswerving guide in a strictly Social-Democratic spirit is undermined and, in principle, the Party organ is reduced to the position of *Rabochee Delo*, which considered as its task only the expression of 'the already attained level of consciousness', only not the 'level of consciousness' of the working masses, but that of the practical comrades, as it was forced to pander to the opinion of an accidental majority.

Such was the state of affairs created by the 'hard' *Iskra*-ites in principle. In practice, at the present moment, thanks to a series of diplomatic chess moves, the hand-picking of appropriate people and the displacement from leading positions of comrades who have proved themselves capable of independent and consistent political activity, a dictatorial position for the Editorial Board of *Iskra* or, rather, for Lenin alone, has been created. I repeat, this was attained not by organisational but by diplomatic means,<sup>163</sup> and at the very next Congress, and perhaps even much earlier, the whole house of cards of Lenin's autocracy will collapse into dust, owing to the demands of life, and will thus express in all its beauty the principle formalised in the organisational rules.

But can we support the current state of affairs, which was created by diplomatic devices and which contradicts the principles which form the basis of the organisational rules? No, we continue to insist that the CC should be genuinely independent in its activity as supreme leader of the Party. Its dependence on the CO, in so far as this goes beyond the framework of ideological (not compulsory) dependence, will hinder its activity, preventing those necessary and unavoidable compromises to which the CC is compelled to resort: these are necessary because, if it loses real connections with the committees, the CC will turn into a fiction; they are unavoidable, because we cannot fail to recognise that we need to work more and more to ensure that the political education of everybody, or at least the overwhelming majority of Social-Democratic practicals, starts to fully satisfy all Social-Democratic demands, so that the class development of the Russian proletariat reaches a state which would allow it to give an entirely Social-Democratic character to all the practical activity of the Party. On the other hand, the organisational connectedness of the CO will inevitably interfere with the 'irreconcilability' of its position, forcing it to limit the depth, decisiveness and sharpness of its criticism. The

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163 What Dan means by 'diplomatic' here is hard to understand, as the reorganisation of the Editorial Board was decided by a series of majority votes at the Second RSDLP Congress.

CO will push the CC (and push it not ideologically, but using force) into irreconcilability and will prevent the necessary practical compromises, but the CC, in its turn, will push the CO into compromises and hinder its irreconcilability, which is necessary for the development of the Party.

Apart from that, can we support that state of affairs which links the entire fate of the Party and, consequently, the fate of the Russian proletariat and Russian freedom to the fate of one person, however much we have faith in his wisdom, talent and energy? Can we support a situation where it is enough for this person to fall ill, lose his popularity, change his opinions and so on for the whole laboriously constructed edifice of Russian Social Democracy to collapse into dust, owing to the fact (can this be doubted?) that a state of affairs based wholly on faith in the personal capacities of one person prevents the political maturation not only of the working masses, but also of the very leaders of them, the revolutionaries? It is sufficient to pose this question in order to answer it: no, we are obliged to strive for a situation in which the ability of the Party to show a high degree of revolutionary activity and an unswerving character in the Social-Democratic tendency of its ideological leadership – the Party newspaper – is established by organisational means, rather than being secured by the selection of one or another group of individuals who are only accidentally successful at present, and who, in a moment, can be destroyed by the decision of a Congress, a decision which yields to some temporary factor, to some change of mood or other.

And if the rules adopted by the majority of the Congress, which we all recognise as binding on ourselves, contradict those principles which we consider to be true, then our obligation within the framework of these rules is to make use of all means available to us so that we secure the possibility of freely, openly and unambiguously criticising those aspects of the rules which we consider harmful, drawing the attention of comrades to those organisational questions which have great significance for the future destiny of the Russian Social-Democratic movement, in order to prepare minds for a change in the rules at the next Congress in a truly *Iskra* spirit. And this, above all, is the obligation of that group of *Iskra* editors who did not follow in the footsteps of ‘firm’ *Iskra*-ism, that group which was ‘firm’ only in its destruction of all the previous organisational covenants of *Iskra*.

The struggle for the independence of the CC and the independence of Party literature – this is what the Opposition of the Minority amounts to.

## Georgii Plekhanov, 'What is Not to Be Done', *Iskra* No. 52

Shortly after Lenin's resignation from the Editorial Board of *Iskra*,<sup>1</sup> Plekhanov composed a rather curious article, 'What is Not to Be Done', in which he outlined a new attitude towards certain unnamed 'former members' of the revisionist trend who had remained in the RSDLP following the Party's Second Congress.<sup>2</sup> Prior to Lenin's departure, he had at times argued in favour of splitting the Social-Democratic movement into rival revolutionary and opportunist organisations, demanding on other occasions the expulsion of figures such as Bernstein from the Social-Democracy, owing to their revisionist views.<sup>3</sup> His new attitude was sharply at odds with this earlier approach: he now recommended a 'yielding' attitude to

<sup>1</sup> 1 November 1903 N.S.

<sup>2</sup> The revisionists he had in mind appear to have included a group of students, former members of the Union Abroad who had apparently defected to the pro-*Iskra* League Abroad in 1902–3 (Smidovich 1904, p. 30), along with a couple of more prominent individuals such as Konstantin Mikhailovich Takhtarev (1872–1925) and Vladimir Ivanshin, former editors of *Raboचाia Mysl'* and *Rabochee Delo* respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Plekhanov's earlier support for the separation of the left and right wings of Social Democracy into two distinct organisations appears to be shown in his support for a split in the Union Abroad in April 1900 and his opposition to émigré reunification in October 1901. In the latter case in particular, it was disagreement over programmatic questions that prevented the re-unification of the pro-*Rabochee Delo* and the pro-*Iskra* RSDLP organisations. His remarks at the 1900 Paris Congress of the International concerning the division of international Social Democracy into a *Montagne* and a *Gironde* and his support for the Guesdists at this Congress also seems to indicate his support for complete organisational splits (*Zaria* No. 1, pp. 231–9).

Plekhanov's earlier irreconcilable attitude to revisionism is best illustrated in his discussion of Bernstein and the German Party. See Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 316–25 ('On the Alleged Crisis in Marxism') pp. 340–51 ('What Should We Thank Him For?'). As is subsequently pointed out by the authors of the 'Letter from Representatives of the Ufa, Mid-Urals and Perm Committees' included in Chapter 21 of the present collection, this irreconcilable attitude continued to be expressed by Plekhanov right up until the departure of Lenin from the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, in articles such as 'Krasnyi s'ezd v krasnoi strane' ('A Red Congress in a Red State'), *Iskra* No. 49 pp. 1–2, in which the author expresses support for the expulsion of Bernstein from the German Social-Democratic Party.

the 'former followers' of these trends where they continued to differ from the 'orthodox' on secondary or minor matters, and opposed further persecution of them.

The purpose behind this change of heart is not immediately obvious, as there is no evidence of a campaign against former revisionists taking place in the RSDLP during the autumn of 1903. At first glance, Plekhanov appears to be defending a grouping that was, by this stage, insignificant in the Party, from a non-existent attack, and such an article does not seem to deserve the front-page position it was given in the *Iskra* newspaper.<sup>4</sup> However, a degree of clarity as to its real significance is obtained if we refer to the circumstances in which it was written and accept that, whilst nominally being directed towards a non-existent or nearly non-existent problem, it in fact represents an indirect attack on Lenin, particularly his conduct in the ongoing negotiations between the Leninists and the Martovites over the admittance of the latter to the leading bodies of the Party.

This veiled criticism can be more easily understood if we pay attention to the way these negotiations between the Leninists and the Martovites developed during the autumn of 1903. Prior to Lenin's resignation, Plekhanov had evidently been showing a somewhat more yielding attitude than Lenin towards the Martovites for some time. Though both he and Lenin had initially been sympathetic towards the idea of co-opting the 'rejected editors' in the period immediately following the RSDLP Congress,<sup>5</sup> Lenin's attitude had started to become noticeably less conciliatory than Plekhanov's with the discovery that the Martovites were planning to take the dispute to the committees in Russia and to partially boycott *Iskra*. Following the meeting of the Martovites in the middle of September,<sup>6</sup> Lenin appears to have gradually moved towards a position in which he opposed co-options of any kind, whereas Plekhanov, though he too had begun to lose patience with the 'opposition' by the beginning of October, was still prepared to co-opt two new editors from the Martovite group in an attempt to make peace.<sup>7</sup> The chaotic scenes at the League Congress evidently did not strengthen Plekhanov's resolve in relation to the ongoing conflict, and he claims to have told Lenin of his decision to resign the day after the Congress finished. Lenin apparently opposed this step and an alternative arrangement was made in which he, Lenin, would resign.<sup>8</sup> This was probably decided because, as an experienced practical activist, Lenin could be usefully co-opted onto the Central Committee, whereas Plekhanov's increasingly compromising stance as an editor could prove useful if the Martovites were co-opted onto the

4 *Iskra* No. 52, p. 1.

5 See Chapter 17, footnote 1.

6 See Chapter 17.

7 Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 6, pp. 258–64 and pp. 297–301.

8 See above, Martov 1904, Appendix 11.

*Editorial Board. Thus a solution was found in which both the leading Leninists could continue to play leading roles in the Party, whilst at the same time conceding to the Martovites.*

*Lenin therefore departed from the Editorial Board so as to permit a more amicable co-option of the Martovites on the part of his colleague, Plekhanov. However, in doing this there appears to have been an assumption on his part that the balance of factional forces in the other leading institutions of the Party would not be changed following this co-option. This view was evidently not shared by Plekhanov, who soon demanded the resignation of a Lenin supporter who had been chosen to represent the Editorial Board in the Council (Lev Halperin) in line with the Martovites' wishes.<sup>9</sup> Plekhanov also later demanded the co-option of an unstated number of Martovites onto the Central Committee.<sup>10</sup>*

*Lenin evidently experienced these developments as a betrayal on the part of his former ally, in so far as further changes to leading bodies would have given the Martovites at least an equal position in the Party leadership to that of the Leninists, with Plekhanov himself, as the fifth member of the Party Council, holding the balance of power. Opposing this, Lenin expected that his own side should have a majority position as they had won the elections to the leading bodies held at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. Thus, relations between Lenin and Plekhanov degenerated, the latter evidently viewing the former's ongoing insistence that the Party leadership be formed with reference to the RSDLP Congress as a sign of inflexibility and as a sign of unwillingness to compromise.*

*This attitude appears to be reflected in many of the remarks and arguments in 'What is Not to Be Done'. The title of the first evidently reflects that of Lenin's own pamphlet, What Is To Be Done? and in it, an excerpt from one of Lenin's articles serves as a motif, warning against an excessively 'straight' political line which does not allow for adapting to circumstances. The circumstances Plekhanov had in mind here almost certainly related to the negotiations with the Martovites, rather than the revisionists, who nominally formed the subject of the article. In a similar spirit, Plekhanov warns against an excessive enthusiasm for Party discipline, in a passage evidently directed against Lenin's complaint that the Martovites were disrupting and disorganising the Party through their partial 'boycott' of Iskra and their campaign for support among the local committees. Much consideration is then given to the idea that the methods of political activity used by Iskra to attain power in the Party are no longer appropriate now that this power has been attained, and the idea that the warlike habits of this earlier period, now denied an outlet, are being applied to innocent targets. Here too it*

9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, pp. 189–90.

10 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 34, p. 186.

*is hard to avoid the conclusion that the homily concerning excessive combativity is directed against Lenin, especially his evident desire to continue fighting the Martovites following his resignation from the Editorial Board.*

*Lenin responded to 'What is Not to Be Done?' almost immediately, his reply to the article appearing in the following issue of Iskra.<sup>11</sup> The reply praised Plekhanov's commitment to Party unity and reconciliation, but also implied that a genuinely open discussion of the problems in the leadership was necessary. However, this superficially enthusiastic response evidently involved an exercise in tact, and its main purpose appears to have been to show the reading public that its author was not in the least guilty of the faults outlined by Plekhanov in his article: as such it did not touch on the question of Plekhanov's apparent inconsistency, or his discussion of largely fictitious problems. Several months later, writing in the pamphlet One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back, Lenin issued a more honest assessment of the article:*

*In reality, 'What is Not to Be Done' could only be understood at the time it was written by some dozen people living in two Geneva suburbs whose names both begin with the same letter.<sup>12</sup> Comrade Plekhanov's misfortune was that he put into circulation among some 10 000 readers an agglomeration of hints, reproaches, algebraic symbols and riddles which were intended for those dozen or so people who had taken part in all the developments in the post-Congress struggle with the minority. The misfortune fell to Plekhanov because he had violated a basic principle of the dialectics to which he so unluckily referred, namely that there is no abstract truth, truth is always concrete. That is why it was out of place to lend an abstract form to the perfectly concrete idea of yielding to the Martovites after the League Congress.<sup>13</sup>*

*If Lenin waited several months before revealing these thoughts, others were less patient. Plekhanov's article yielded a joint protest from three local committees in Russia who, as Lenin suggests, may not have fully appreciated the allegorical qualities of the piece, and simply assumed that its author was contemplating some form of compromise with anti-Iskra elements.<sup>14</sup> Such suspicions could only have been further excited by the public announcement of Lenin's resignation from the Iskra Editorial Board in the following issue of the newspaper, which also con-*

11 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 114–18.

12 Apparently Carouge and La Cluse (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 566).

13 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 367–8.

14 See Chapter 21 of the present collection.



*tained another unusually sympathetic article by Plekhanov on the 'Economists'.<sup>15</sup> This perception perhaps inevitably put Plekhanov on the defensive, and he quickly responded with a new polemic to the criticism in the form of the article 'Centralism and Bonapartism',<sup>16</sup> which by its very appearance, could be said to have undermined his earlier sermons about compromise and conciliatory behaviour. It is perhaps possible to judge the article 'What is Not to Be Done' as a rhetorical failure on these grounds as it produced precisely the opposite effect from the one it set out to achieve, exciting new polemical articles as opposed to the 'yielding' attitude it had sought to encourage.*

## What is Not to be Done

*GV Plekhanov*

The role performed by the conscious representatives of the Russian proletarian movement becomes more and more significant in proportion to this movement's growth and strengthening. Formerly, in the epoch of the now so-called 'circle-mentality', which should be remembered kindly as it bequeathed to us some considerably valuable acquisitions, the harmful consequences of our mistakes were contained within the narrow bounds of one or several *circles*. Now that we have dealings with the masses, this influence has become incomparably broader. And when the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party finally obtains the centralist organisation so necessary for it, every mistake made by the centre will inevitably spread outwards in every direction. Much will be required from those that are given much.<sup>17</sup> At our centre we need people distinguished not only for their boldness, resolve and persistence, but

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<sup>15</sup> See the next document in the collection.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 21 of the present collection.

<sup>17</sup> Luke ch. 12 v. 48. These words, which emphasise the burdens of responsibility that fall on leaders, come in the context of a parable in which the faithful, waiting for the messianic 'coming of the Son of Man' are compared to servants waiting for the late return of their master from a wedding feast. Thus, using a Christian metaphor, Plekhanov alludes to the approaching Russian revolution.

also for their enormous *circumspection*. They are required to be, indeed, *as wise as serpents*.<sup>18</sup>

But an ability to reckon with a given situation is the first sign of political wisdom. Who does not possess such an ability is not born for political activity, and acts more sensibly when he declines all responsible political roles. Politics demands a great suppleness of mind from people engaged in it; it does not know unchanging rules that are once and for always given. This goes without saying, but it serves a purpose to remind people about it now, when a widespread inclination towards such rules exists among us, one which threatens to bring great damage to our Party. We know that this inclination was of highly reputable origin. It emerged as a reaction against that disregard concerning political principles which so unprofitably distinguished our 'Economists'. But unfortunately this reaction, in its turn, is leading to a completely undesirable extremity and promises to give all our political thought that very same *metaphysical* character which distinguished the thought of the 'Economists', with great harm to our cause. The 'Economists' reasoned with the formula: 'let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no": any more than this is the Devil's work'.<sup>19</sup> They showed themselves completely incapable of rising to *dialectics*, the basic thesis of which states that there is no abstract truth, that truth is always concrete and that everything depends on circumstances of time and place. The struggle with these obstinate, incorrigible metaphysicians was necessary in the interests of the revolutionary movement. But if, having secured a complete victory over them, we begin to imitate their ways of thinking, if we ourselves indulge in political one-sidedness, then our victory will prove far less fruitful than we considered it to be up until now. Indeed, should this happen, some satirist may well ask us, and not without reason: who won, strictly speaking – you or your opponent?

Comrade Lenin, in an article dedicated to our agrarian programme printed in the fourth issue of *Zaria*, wittily jokes about the 'straightforwardness of a certain bird'.<sup>20</sup> His witty joke will be most likely recalled not only in connection

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18 Matthew ch. 10 v. 16: 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves'.

19 Matthew ch. 5: v. 37.

20 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, p. 137. Lenin's remark concerns the importance of taking a balanced attitude to the agrarian programme of the Populists, especially the slogan of 'black redistribution', the general expropriation of gentry, crown and church lands and their redistribution among the peasantry. In his view, this slogan had both revolutionary and reactionary implications, as it had the potential to inspire peasant uprisings that

with the debate on the agrarian programme. 'The straightforwardness of a certain bird' in practical politics is yet more dangerous than in theoretical arguments. It is so much more dangerous here as it is easy, perhaps, to take it for a *hardness of character* with which it has absolutely nothing in common, as it much more easily gets along with that common or garden obstinacy which still does not in the least support either clarity of political thought or a firm striving toward a chosen goal: indeed, it is well known that straightforward and obstinate people often turn out to be inconsistent.

In politics, unchanged, once and for always accepted rules inevitably and quickly lead to defeat. Whoever wants to become worthy of *victory* must stay unchanged only in their desire to approach their goal, come what may. All of the rest is, and must be, changeable because all the rest has only a *relative* value for such a person.

We hope the following example well illustrates to what degree it is necessary to be wary of 'the straightforwardness of a certain bird'.

All we so-called 'orthodox' – partisans of revolutionary Social Democracy in other words – are obliged to lead an energetic and irreconcilable struggle with 'revisionism' in all its forms and varieties. Revisionism is entirely incompatible with our opinions. Its final conclusion is the complete rejection of *socialism*. Therefore, reconciliation with revisionism can come only from those who consciously or unconsciously gravitate towards a reconciliation with the existing, *bourgeois* order of things. Such is the general rule. It will be asked, does this not mean that, if we are always at odds *with revisionism*, we are always and everywhere obliged to be at enmity *with revisionists*? People, distinguished by the 'straightforwardness of a certain bird', naturally say: *yes*. We suggest that the question here, as everywhere else, is that our practical policy must be determined by circumstances of time and place. This seems strange. However, the reader will now see that in reality there is nothing strange here.

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could aid the democratic revolution, but at the same time reflected support for small-proprietor farming. The latter, in itself, would not represent social and economic progress or a step towards socialism, and without state intervention it would only lay the basis for a post-revolutionary recrudescence of agrarian capitalism. In this article ('The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social Democracy'), he criticises Martynov's one-sided support for the slogan, which was defended in the article, 'Exposure Literature and Proletarian Struggle', in *Rabochee Delo* No. 10, Chapter 10 in the current collection. It is not clear which 'bird' Lenin has in mind, though it could be the 'straight-flying' crow. In Plekhanov's article, such imagery served as an apt metaphor for Lenin's allegedly inflexible policy regarding the Martovites and other opponents within the RSDLP.

Imagine that our centre which, it is understood, must be made up of determined and uncompromising enemies of revisionism, has dealings with one or several groups of those Social Democrats who formerly yielded to the influence of revisionism and fought with the 'orthodox' in the name of 'freedom of criticism', but who have now seen the danger in it and have acknowledged all the main positions of 'orthodox' socialism – Marxism – and now only in consequence of some inconsistency and, so to say, *inertia* of thought, defend some 'dogma' or other favoured by revisionism. How should our centre treat these groups? Should it exclude them from the Party? It would perhaps be easy, and it would of course be impossible to be, more 'straightforward'. But would it be expedient? In other words: would it be useful *for the unity of our Party and for the struggle with this same revisionism*? We think: *no*.

Why precisely do we make war with the revisionists? So that we can deprive them of influence on the proletariat, to whom they indicate a false road. Obviously the struggle with them is conducted not for the sake of struggle, but because this struggle has the goal of weakening *revisionism* and if it does not attain such a goal, if for one or another reason it not only fails to weaken the aforementioned influence, but strengthens it, then it does *harm* and it is better to discontinue it as soon as possible. And in the above case, war with the revisionists would lead not to the weakening, but to the strengthening of the influence of revisionism, just as it would prevent a certain section of Social Democrats from finally breaking off relations with them, or would even compel them to become good friends again. Therefore it would be damaging for the Party, and whoever says that it should be declared all the same displays unforgivable pedantry and terrible short-sightedness. Our centre must possess a big reserve of *combativity*: combativity is necessary to it as a representative of the revolutionary class. But whenever the interests of our Party demand *peace*, it is obliged to be *peace-loving, mild and compliant*. A leader of the organised proletariat, defending a cause of paramount importance, *does not have the right* to yield to his warlike *inclinations* where these inclinations contradict *political calculation*.

Very funny and, if you like, pitiful, are these flabby people who, already for many, many years and with a stubbornness deserving of a much better fate, have been whiningly recommending 'comradely methods in polemic'. But why are they funny and pitiful? Only because, through their political naivety, they want us to adopt, as comrades, those that are completely incapable of going down the same road as us. But if they advise us to spare opponents who are capable of being our comrades and who are already becoming them, then their advice would be very sensible, and they would deserve praise and not laughter. Harshness is only good where it is appropriate. Quite inappropriate

harshness is sooner worthy of a Sobakevich<sup>21</sup> rather than an 'orthodox' Social Democrat.

The question about whether some harshness is appropriate or inappropriate in one situation or another can naturally only be decided by evaluating all the circumstances peculiar to the case. But it is impossible to doubt that, in the present situation, we should not be harsh in our dealings with comrades who once had a tendency towards 'Economism'. To the great honour of these comrades, it must be said that the great majority of them, having seeing the direction in which Bernsteinism, the close relation of 'Economism' in its modes of thought, was leading, began to draw closer to us and they acknowledged all the main positions of 'orthodox' socialism. True, there is still room for argument with many of them; the disagreements have not completely disappeared. But now these disagreements are so *inessential* that to get excited and start quarrels because of them is simply not worth it. And it would be very harmful for our cause if these, to repeat, inessential differences continued to divide us into two hostile camps. Formerly we *fought*; now we are able to limit ourselves to an *exchange of ideas*. Previously there were partisans of *Zaria* and *Iskra*, and partisans of *Rabochee Delo* and *Krasnoe Znamia*; now there ought to be partisans of *revolutionary Social Democracy* alone, the views of which – as if they did not diverge on matters of detail – can be expressed with comfort in the pages of the one publication, where its columns are hospitably open to both sides. This is *still not the case*: but this *already could have been the case* and with great benefit to our Party, and that is why *we need to make it happen*. In any event, we must not do anything that would be capable of *hindering* it.

At the current point, at which our Party has left, or at very least is preparing to leave its childhood, we would do well to cast a critical eye over our political ideas and ask ourselves whether there were not things among us which were suitable only for children. Ideas in this category undoubtedly exist. Let us indicate one of them. We have become accustomed to thinking that a Social Democrat must be uncompromising, if he does not wish to sin with opportunism. But there are different types of 'uncompromising' and this is a type of 'uncompromising' which, *in its practical consequences*, is tantamount to the most undesirable forms of *acquiescence*. Not compromising in our relations with those who could become our comrades makes us less strong in struggle with those opponents who will never be comrades. These opponents will use

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21 A landowner in Gogol's *Dead Souls* (Gogol 1842). He is strong, silent, rude and self-centred, incapable of understanding other people's point of view, judging everything according to the yardstick of his own interests. Much of his negative behaviour is unconscious. His name echoes the Russian word for 'dog' (*sobaka*), indicating cynicism.

our weakness to seize those positions which belong to us by right. The result is that false shame before compromise makes us compromising against our will wherever compromise is obligatory.

In order for it to flourish, the movement of the working class needs certain legal institutions guaranteeing it some degree of *political freedom*. Where this freedom is lacking, the movement exists under abnormal conditions. And one of the most harmful consequences of this abnormality appears to be the *sectarian spirit of exclusivity* not infrequently showing itself in the mutual relations obtaining between the organised fractions of the proletariat. This sectarian spirit simultaneously comprises a result, and a cause, of the weakness of socialism. The great interests of the working class demand that we do all that is humanly possible to eliminate this harmful spirit. Now this is more necessary than ever. In proportion to the development of our public life and in proportion to the aggravation of the class contradictions of our own particular society, the number of revolutionary Social Democracy's clear and conscious enemies grows and its political situation in several senses becomes more and more difficult in consequence of this. In order to cope with the growing difficulties of our situation, we must attract to our ranks all those who are capable of helping us, and helpful to us will be all those firmly adhering to the point of view of the proletariat, possessing at the same time the wish and the capacity for planned, organised work. And we, of course, will only attract those helpful elements to our side if we manage to understand the practical duties lying with us, and do not start to imitate the 'straightforward bird'.

Another example. Among those tasks which we must fulfil under pain of the most fatal stagnation, no task is more important than *the task of our self-education in the spirit of Party discipline*. Organised political activity is unthinkable without discipline in general. It is all the more necessary under Russian conditions, which deprive us of all possibility of legal, open action. Finally it is all the more necessary for us Russian revolutionaries to strive towards self-education in the spirit of discipline, as our main inadequacy consists – as is well-known – in *anarchic individualism*, something which makes combined and harmonious work extraordinarily difficult. Our centre *must* have a very strict attitude towards the violation of discipline in our ranks. Nonetheless, it would be a great pity if, from time to time, it did not manage to refrain from the fulfilment of this important duty. When a speech is made about discipline it is necessary to be three times as circumspect and cautious. The discipline which we strive for is entirely different from the discipline prevailing in a barracks. The soldier is subject to the authorities *through compulsion*: we comply – when we comply – with the demand of Party discipline *through free will*. The free will of a revolutionary constitutes *a solely psychological basis* for our dis-

cipline. Everything that strengthens this basis is helpful for our revolutionary education; everything that undermines it is harmful to us. It is strengthened by many and various influences. We will not begin to enumerate them: that would take much too long. We will only say that among them *the demand of obedience* does not occupy first place. This is far from the case! Very often, the unconquerable desire to violate discipline appears in the Russian revolutionary precisely because he has been admonished about it. This, it goes without saying, is very bad and it is rooted in a feeling which has absolutely nothing in common with devotion to the revolutionary idea. But, unfortunately, this is how we are, and one cannot fail to reckon with this fact. If we forgot about it, or if we did not consider it necessary to pay attention to the psychology of contemporary Russian revolutionaries, then our efforts would bring us to a goal directly opposing that towards which we are striving, that is, *instead of organising the Party, we would assist in its disorganisation, and instead of doing what was required to educate ourselves in the spirit of Party discipline, we would strengthen our inclination towards anarchy*. And this would indeed be an entirely bad service to the Party. Under such circumstances, it is clear that an ill-timed exactingness could easily prove the worst of all weaknesses due to its consequences for the movement. It is also clear that, in the interests of supporting *and* strengthening discipline, it is sometimes useful to close one's eyes to its infringement. Finally, it is also clear that we need to remember this more often now, at a time when we have only started to lay down the basis of the Party organisation and when frequent violations of Party discipline are unavoidable, simply by force of bad habits inherited from the long epoch of disorder and handicraft methods. Always and everywhere inconvenient, 'the straightforwardness of a certain bird' is inconvenient for us at the present moment, more than at any other time, because now it is possible to lead our Party *literally to the edge of ruin*.

In a word, we must avoid everything that might be capable of provoking new *splits* in our midst. We have had too many splits and they have brought us too much harm. Now it is necessary to preserve *unity* with all our strength. Our Party must preserve it under pain of a complete loss of political credit. If new schisms emerge amongst us, the workers – who, as everybody knows, were not a little confused in the past by our discord – would completely cease to understand us, and we would present to the world the sad and comic spectacle of a general staff deserted by its army and demoralised by internal struggles. It is not hard to guess who would profit from this outcome, so lamentable for us.

'Do not be afraid,' say some, altogether too sanguine comrades, 'the future still belongs to us, and our Party will acquit itself of its difficulties honourably'.



To this we answer that we also have the firmest confidence in the future triumph of Russian Social Democracy, but this pleasing confidence does not entirely deliver us from a sacred duty of criticism in relation to our own actions. The triumph of our Party will be prepared by a set of conditions, some of which will have a *positive*, some a *negative* significance. It could not be worse if, in this algebraic sum just indicated, a *minus* figure stood before the figure representing our practical activity. It is impossible to invent a more cruel mockery of fate or a more evil irony of history.

There is among us one category of optimists who poorly understand the current state of affairs. Optimists of this category are convinced that a new split would not be harmful, but rather beneficial for our Party. No argument is introduced in support of this strange opinion other than the observation that Russian Social Democracy has grown strongly in recent years, at a time when it was riven by internecine strife. Thus they let the fact that internecine strife *does not help the growth of Social Democracy, but slows it* escape from view. *They forget, apart from this, that the less significant the disagreements existing between members of one and the same Party, the more damaging are the splits provoked by these disagreements.* When we were at war with the 'Economists', everybody who was not stupid was able to understand what the war was about. But now, such unity of opinion holds sway in our ranks that a new split would not have any serious basis and would prove comprehensible and excusable perhaps only to stupid people. And thus it would damage the credibility of our Party incomparably more than the previous, also very damaging splits.

Everything flows, everything changes. Our methods of activity are also unable to stay unchanged. Chekhov's 'man in a case'<sup>22</sup> was remarkable in that he always, even in very fine weather, went out in galoshes and with an umbrella, and always in a warm quilted coat. 'Men in cases' do not suit us Social Democrats, and it would be very funny and very sad if we did not consider the demands of the political weather. Consistent Marxists are not able to be and, of course, will not be centralist *utopians*.

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22 This refers to Chekhov's short story, 'The Man in the Case' (Chekhov 1986b), a character study about an emotionally repressed teacher with conservative social attitudes who cannot stand unpredictability. Presumably, this represents an implied criticism of Lenin's supposedly 'bureaucratic' adherence to the RSDLP constitution at the expense of Party unity.

## Georgii Plekhanov, ‘Something on “Economism” and “Economists”’, *Iskra* No. 53

*In Iskra No. 53, the first issue to be edited with the participation of the co-opted Martovites, Plekhanov published a second article which promoted the idea of a reconciliation with the former opponents of Iskra. This time the focus was on those ‘former Economists’ who had previously advocated a ‘stagist’ approach to agitation, an approach they had justified with the argument that workers could only be attracted to Social Democracy if the latter’s initial approach to them emphasised their day-to-day material, ‘economic’ needs.<sup>1</sup> As with ‘What is Not to Be Done’, this second article, ‘Something on “Economism” and “Economists”’, seems to have served mainly as a pretext for indirectly criticising the supposedly irreconcilable tendencies of the Lenin group, and this criticism appears to have taken the form of reproaches directed against certain so-called ‘politicals’ in the Social Democracy who allegedly took an entirely negative attitude toward economic agitation.*

*In the article, Plekhanov offers an analysis of ‘Economism’ as a historical phenomenon, presenting it as a trend rooted in a reaction against the circle-propaganda methods earlier employed by Russian Social Democrats. This trend strove towards involvement in mass social struggles on the part of the working class and to this extent Plekhanov appears to view its development as positive, though he also raises criticism of some of its theoretical assumptions. He identifies ‘Economism’ with ‘stagism’, and suggests that the ‘Economists’ had an altogether too simplistic attitude regarding the relationship between ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’ (‘the relation of economy to law’), which caused them to expect workers’ class-consciousness to grow in accordance with the growth and centralisation of capitalist industry. He alludes to the fact that this strict economic determinism caused them to view spontaneous clashes between workers and their employers as the embryonic form of future clashes of a revolutionary and socialist character, whilst failing to recognise that they could be harnessed to serve a cause alien to the workers’ movement, that of the liberal bourgeoisie, which really only aimed at reform of the autocracy. However, he then quite astutely draws a distinction between ordinary activists who gave support to the ‘Economist’ trend because it seemed to support mass social struggle, and their*

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<sup>1</sup> See Krichevskii’s ‘Economic and Political Struggle in the Russian Workers’ Movement’, Chapter 6 of the present collection, for a clear exposition of this point of view.

intellectual leaders, pointing out that, if many of the latter first misled and eventually broke with Social Democracy<sup>2</sup> and even betrayed it, this cannot be said of the majority of Social Democrats who supported 'Economism' and who eventually realised its limitations as a result of practical experience rather than theoretical argument.

In all these respects, Plekhanov's 'post-mortem' of 'Economism' is somewhat more balanced than certain polemics he directed against it during its period of Rabochee Delo's influence in the RSDLP. As late as 1901, Plekhanov was still capable of publishing an almost entirely negative assessment of the pamphlet, 'On Agitation', despite the evident involvement of its authors in the practical struggles of the Jewish and Russian workers' movements and despite all the evidence that 'economic' agitation brought Russian Social Democracy into meaningful contact with large numbers of workers for the first time. On these grounds one might say that 'Something on "Economism"' would have benefited from a more open acknowledgement of these earlier excesses, rather more than from the allegations Plekhanov actually makes regarding the existence of a 'political' trend in the RSDLP, which is supposedly responsible for the excessive persecution of the 'Economists'.

Generally speaking, this claim regarding a 'political' trend is hard to substantiate, as Plekhanov does not provide effective evidence demonstrating its existence in the course of the article, and it is therefore tempting to conclude that he invented the phenomenon for polemical purposes, hinting but failing to clearly state that the 'politicals' are the supporters of Lenin. In reality, the apparently warm reception with which the 'economic' section of the Iskra-Zaria programme was received at the Second RSDLP Congress<sup>3</sup> strongly suggests that no exclusively 'political' faction, which was opposed to economic agitation, existed in the Russian Social Democracy by the time 'Something on "Economism"' was written, and though Plekhanov could, and did, elsewhere refer to cases of revolutionaries taking a dismissive attitude towards workers' strikes over economic issues in the years immediately preceding the Second RSDLP Congress, these cases do not appear to have involved members of the RSDLP itself.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, it seems

2 Several key intellectual figures in the Russian 'revisionist debate' such as Struve, Kuskova, Tugan-Baranovskii and Prokopovich finally broke with Social Democracy at around the turn of the twentieth century. In July 1902, they created the liberal-democratic émigré journal, *Osvobozhdenie*, and a separate organisation, the 'Union of Liberation', was created the following year. In 1905, with increased political freedom inside Russia, the Union helped found the Constitutional-Democratic ('Cadet') Party, Russia's main liberal-democratic party in the period 1905–17.

3 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 238–49.

4 See Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 270–7 and pp. 316–24. In these articles, which were published in *Iskra* at the beginning of 1903, Plekhanov defended the conduct of the Don Committee of

*inappropriate to associate the Lenin group with this so-called 'political' tendency, though in the search for a more suitable candidate, the examples of the 'People's Will' and 'Emancipation of Labour' groups of the 1880s somewhat curiously stand out, as both of these did appear to take a negative attitude towards 'economic' strikes by workers during this period. Of course, the relevance of these groups' tactical positions to the RSDLP in the period following its Second Congress is in no sense obvious and, as a result, the question of why 'Something on "Economism"' was written and published remains both obscure and intriguing.*

*One possible and quite straightforward explanation is that Plekhanov wanted to lean on the support of the ex-'Economists' in the emigration in some way or other and to this end was prepared to sing praises of their previous services to the Party. For example, it is quite conceivable that, given the resignation of Lenin from the Editorial Board and the notorious lack of journalistic output on the part of Axelrod, Potresov and Zasulich, certain figures previously involved in 'Economist' publications might have been considered for editorial posts by Plekhanov. Another possibility is that the article's author had received some kind of rebuke from one section of the Leninists in response to 'What is Not to Be Done', in which he was accused of deviating towards 'Economism'. 'Something on "Economism"' would certainly have served as a reply to any such criticism as Plekhanov, on the assumption that most readers would view him as unquestionably 'orthodox', could try to suggest that criticism directed against him of a deviation towards 'Economism' in itself proved the existence of an 'ultra-political' tendency in the Party. Whilst this is evidently dubious reasoning, which seems to rest on the assumption that Plekhanov's own 'orthodox' credentials are beyond question, such argumentation would nonetheless serve a purpose, as he could then pose as a mediator reconciling two 'extremes': the 'political' and the 'Economist'. Whilst this explanation might seem a little convoluted, such a reconciliation is actually proposed in the article and it does rather reflect the fact that Plekhanov, having obtained the co-optation of a second Martovite onto the Party Council, did actually hold the balance of power in the Party leadership at this stage.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore possible that, appreciating how advantageous this position was for him personally, Plekhanov was eager to develop a narrative justifying his acquisition of this powerful role, which*

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the RSDLP during a general strike in Rostov, which broke out in November 1902. Specifically, he justified the local committee's emphasis on 'economic' agitation against those who criticised it for not sufficiently politicising the strike by raising anti-autocratic demands and holding street demonstrations. He pointed out that, unlike these forms of protest, the strike bore a clearly working-class character and that, unlike previous demonstrations, it involved many thousands of people, as opposed to a few small but heroic groups.

5 See the commentary to Chapter 19 for more details.

*the Leninists would subsequently describe as the result of his defection from their camp to that of the Martovites.*

## Something on 'Economism' and 'Economists'

*(Thoughts aloud regarding the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party)*

Still very close to us is that time when we waged a stubborn and bitter war with 'Economism', and when every line dedicated to this tendency in our publications displayed a more or less decisive sally against it. Therefore we are not in the least surprised if the heading of our article provokes the expectation in the reader of new attacks on 'Economism'. But though such an expectation is completely natural, we wish to declare in advance that it is mistaken. On this occasion, we take up the pen with goals that are not at all polemical. It seems to us that there has already been enough polemic with the 'Economists' and that this has achieved its goal, not having left stone upon stone in the latter's theoretical constructs and having deprived it of all influence on the Russian proletariat. To make war with it would be just as pointless and just as strange as fighting with a dead body. However, it does not follow from this that 'Economism' no longer represents any interest to us. It is absurd to fight with a corpse: but it is possible to submit it to an autopsy, and its autopsy can give a useful lesson to those still fully alive. In the present article, we want to look at 'Economism' precisely from this *anatomical* point of view. We want to cut open the deceased so that its organisation explains to us that historical *function* which it was destined to exercise in life.

A Latin proverb states: *de mortuis aut bene, aut nihil* (remember the dead kindly or say nothing about them). Having started to speak about 'Economism', we cannot unfortunately follow the benevolent advice given by this proverb. We are compelled from the very first word to remember the deceased in a bad sense. Anybody who took the trouble to carefully think through its theory understands that it threatened the very existence of Social Democracy in Russia. The people who worked it out and were occupied with its dissemination amongst us were ideologues of the *petty bourgeoisie* who were, by their very nature, incapable of adopting the point of view of the *proletariat* and

who, precisely because of this 'sufficient cause',<sup>6</sup> strove to *narrow the doctrine of Marx*, which they grasped at as the most orderly and harmonious sociological doctrine of our time, to the boundaries of their own philistine limitedness. As always happens, as always will happen and as always has to happen in the case of such experiments on the notable author of *Capital*, the theoreticians of 'Economism' operated with the help of several fundamental *theoretical mistakes*. The most important of these mistakes concerned, as is well known, two opinions: firstly, an opinion on the relation of *economy to law* in the process of the historical development of human society; secondly – and in close connection to the one which has just been indicated – an opinion on the role of great historical parties in the cause of developing the self-awareness of those classes whose interests they represent. Both these opinions had important *practical* significance. If they had been adopted by the Russian proletariat, this class would have been made completely incapable of struggling for its full liberation from the yoke of capitalism and could only have obediently tailed the liberal bourgeoisie, which for its part, would have flung some more or less pitiful 'social reform' at it from time to time, as a reward for good behaviour.

In accordance with the nature of that social class which they represented in the sphere of ideology, the theorists of 'Economism' were, whilst not suspecting it themselves, theoreticians of a *social peace* from which the proletariat can win precisely nothing and in which, on the contrary, it risks losing even what it has gained through *social war*. However, this mortal sin against the working class would be entirely sufficient justification for an absolutely merciless war against 'Economism'. But that is not all. Not being in a position to understand the relation of the economy to law in general and, consequently, to social law, the theoreticians of 'Economism' not infrequently acted as proselytisers of those political ideas, the assimilation of which by the proletariat would have very significantly weakened its energy, even in the struggle with the currently existing political order. In these cases, the voice of class instinct fell silent under the influence of a mistaken dogma and – this is how harmful the influence of dogma is! – these ideologists of the petty-bourgeoisie, so interested in the triumph of political freedom, sometimes acted as the allies of tsarism. True they did it unintentionally and unconsciously. But this did not reduce the harmful effect of their doctrines and it once more shows to what degree a war with 'Economism' was obligatory in its day. Every Social Democrat who truly understood its character, and who did not want to betray his banner, had to rise up in arms against it.

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6 A medical term referring to the causes of a disease.

But if all this is so – and it is undoubtedly so – then one may ask: how is it possible to explain the temporary, but nonetheless great, success of ‘Economism’ among Social Democrats? Were the latter really tending towards a betrayal of the proletariat? Even the most hardened of its detractors would not decide to answer this question – if they wanted to be fair, naturally – in the affirmative without making very important reservations. True, our Social Democracy was far from distinguished by that uniformity of composition that it has now acquired during the epoch of the flourishing of ‘Economism’. At that time, the *flakiness*, thanks to which a sizeable section of individuals who were affiliated to us openly went over to the bourgeois camp, was still only being prepared. All these people – future ‘critics’, renegades of Marxism – could not help grasp at ‘Economism’ as a doctrine promising to convert Marx himself into an instrument for the mental enslavement of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. But it is not these individuals who set the tone among those Social Democrats who were agitating among workers: the great majority of these individuals were already so saturated with the spirit of contemporary bourgeois egotism that they did not in the least like the perspective of ending up in prison or in exile for illegal activity. They diligently avoided direct dealings with selfless bearers of socialist ideas and were limited by whatever caused a sensation ‘among themselves’ and in so-called ‘society’, which soon understood that, despite the unfamiliar Marxist terminology, such individuals were made of the same flesh and blood as itself. Then as now, only those dedicated to the proletariat with all their soul worked among workers, those who hated the bourgeoisie with all their hearts.

And these selfless people, who stood entirely on the side of the proletariat, were also fascinated by ‘Economism’ at the time. What drew them towards it? Given that we cannot allow that they obeyed a bourgeois instinct in this passion, there remains just one possible explanation: they did not understand the true character of ‘Economism’. But this explanation requires a further explanation: why did the true character of the doctrine now under discussion remain unknown to this category of its followers? Possibly because they were not very bright? We do not have the right to think this: in the matter of thought, the average Social Democrat of the ‘Economist’ type was in no sense weaker than the present Social Democrats of the ‘political’ tendency. Of course, one has to tell the truth: the ‘Economists’ did not capture enough great stars from the heavens when it came to theory. But precisely because it is necessary to be truthful, we must acknowledge that so far the current ‘politicals’ have also failed to gather together a great number of these stars. Theory did not spend its time usefully with the ‘Economist’ ‘practical’. But the current ‘practical’ of the political shade also applies himself to theory in God-only-knows-what kind



of fashion. If we really told the truth, we would say that our current 'political' practicals are distinguished by that same carelessness regarding theory as the practical-'Economists' of the recent past. Carelessness in relation to theory is the chronic failure of the Russian revolutionary scene and, on this account, we will soon need to conduct a separate conversation with readers. For the moment, we will only note that the failing peculiar to our current 'politicals', which once applied in the exact same degree to the 'Economists', cannot sufficiently explain the mistake which constitutes the main distinguishing sign of the latter. Therefore it is clear that we need to look for an explanation of these mistakes in some other psychological feature belonging to our comrades from the 'economic' period. We will now try to lay bare these features.

Re-read *Rabochaia Mysl'*,<sup>7</sup> the main publication of the 'Economist' practicals; re-read all of the not very many publications issued by the comrades grouped around this newspaper. You will find many mistakes there and you will understand why *Rabochaia Mysl'* annoyed the opponents of 'Economism' so much. But given that now these mistakes no longer have a practical significance, we advise you not to dwell on them, but to direct your attention to the predominant practical aim of its editors and correspondents, the red thread running through all its editorials, articles and reports. This practical aim can be characterised as *the aim of giving our socialist movement a broad mass character, come what may*. Up to now, socialism has been the business of the intelligentsia; workers have been inspired by its ideas as *separate individuals* or, at best, *separate circles* which were all the more separate from the masses, the clearer their socialist consciousness became. But socialism separate from the masses is doomed to complete powerlessness and remains a lofty dream, the noble spiritual entertainment of a few intellectual epicureans. And this powerlessness of *socialism* which is separated from the masses constitutes *the power of the tsarist government*, which relies on the masses' lack of consciousness.

In order to destroy this dark force and in order to give socialism that character which it has in the advanced countries of the civilised world – the character of a powerful factor in the development of social life as a whole – it is necessary to link its ideals with the everyday needs of the Russian proletariat, it is necessary to make it the ideological expression of the difficult day-to-day struggle of

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7 *Rabochaia Mysl'* was the newspaper of the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle from 1897–1902. It carried certain articles expressing 'Economist' views which took a negative attitude both towards the influence of Social-Democratic intellectuals on the labour movement and towards the foundation of the RSDLP. For this reason, it did not play an important role in the development of the Party. For a detailed examination of its contents, see Lih 2006, pp. 240–78 and for a translated editorial from it, see Harding and Taylor 1983 pp. 242–9.

this class with its oppressors. But given that this struggle is still in a rudimentary state and has not left that *stage* at which the field of view of the fighters is limited by their *economic* interests, given that the relation of these interests to the currently existing *political* order is still not clear to the working class, the *expression* should be brought into correspondence with *that which is expressed*, and our socialist propaganda should adopt a predominantly *economic* character. When this teaching does its work, when the economic struggle takes on broad dimensions, when the masses participating in it finally understand that the tsarist government cannot but stand on the side of their exploiters, then the time for *political* agitation has come and then we will lead the proletariat against tsarism. And up to that point any activity connected to politics remains empty activity, capable only of sweetening the unwanted, but long and boring, leisure time of an intelligentsia separated from life.

This is how the 'Economist' practicals reasoned and, so long as their reasoning never met with sympathy among the intelligentsia, which in its political positions inclined mainly towards political struggle, so long did it remain the enemy of the intelligentsia. We all know that among many of them, the word '*intelligent*' amounted to an abusive word. This enmity towards the intelligentsia, from whom the workers could have learned much, slowed down the development of the class self-awareness of the proletariat and thus earned condemnation. But in condemning it, you should remember where it came from and, remembering where it came from, you will have to agree that the guilt of the 'Economist' practicals is mitigated by a highly important circumstance: the fact that the previous period of the socialist movement of our intelligentsia was completely separated from the popular masses.

Whoever firmly supports the position of contemporary scientific socialism will easily spot all the terrible blunders of the 'Economist' practicals in relation to the intelligentsia. But the fact is, this position was alien both to these 'Economists' and especially to those against whom they first of all directed the blows of their criticism: first of all they came out almost exclusively against the 'People's Will' supporters, who had more or less transformed their programme in consequence of arguments with *Social Democrats*, but who were all the same incapable of assimilating in its entirety that greatest practical truth of our time, that socialism becomes an influential social force only to the degree it serves as the theoretical expression of the liberation struggle of the proletariat. The 'Economist' practicals distorted the position of the *Communist Manifesto*: 'every class struggle is a political struggle', interpreting it in the sense that *every clash of people from one class* – in this case the workers – *with people from another class* – in this case with the employers – *constitutes an act of political struggle*. But this position is still worse understood – better to say,

it is entirely ignored – by those who have for so long imagined that political struggle can be victorious *without in the least becoming a class struggle*. This second, and still more coarse error, explains the first, which emerged as an inevitable reaction against it.

Of course, it was a great pity that this reaction was not sent in the direction in which the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, which since the beginning of the eighties has adopted the position of Marx, tried to send it. However, it is no use crying for the moon. The world view of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group was too complex for it to be adopted by the majority of Social Democrats at that point: it seemed strange to them, doubtful, and very close to the position of 'People's Will', with whom they had almost daily skirmishes. One cannot speak about this now without a smile. But are you certain that all the present 'politicals' have fully adopted the views of this group? As regards ourselves, we are – alas! – far from certain of it. Be that as it may, it is hard for even the most 'practical' practice to survive without ideas in our odd century. Thus our comrades go after ideas they really should not go after: after 'lovers of wisdom',<sup>8</sup> the ideas of whom were subsequently set out in the notorious *Credo*. Thus occurred one of the saddest *quid pro quo* the history of our movement has ever heard of; people who had sincerely and selflessly stood up for the interests of the *proletariat* for the most part, and with no little incredulity, turned away from the *proletarian* doctrine, from Marxism in its pure form, and gladly welcomed the 'critical' exercises of gentlemen occupied with the overturning of scientific socialism in a bourgeois manner.

The attractive force of these childish exercises was conditioned by the fact that the not less mistaken theory of stages, which was at that time very dear to the 'Economist' practicals, and which justified the exclusively economic character of the agitation among the workers then taking place, was supported by their theoretically untenable – as has already been said – interpretation of the relation between *economy* and *law* and the role of *parties* in the political education of *classes*. The mistakes of bourgeois theoreticians could not have been more to the liking of the practical defenders of proletarian interests. Then it was simply impossible to not be annoyed at the sight of this misunderstanding, but *now*, when it has become a matter entirely in the past, it is already time to recall that it was, all the same, *only* a misunderstanding, and that between the

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8 *Liubomudry*, a Russianisation of the word 'philosophers', the name earlier adopted by a secret intellectual circle existing in Russia from 1823–5, whose members revealed diverse political preferences. They took a shared interest in the Romantic and idealist philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854) whilst criticising the materialism and classicism of the French Enlightenment.

'Economist' practicals on the one hand and the 'Economist' theoreticians on the other, lay an abyss *in terms of their essential aims*. To remember this is very useful now, as in reality we still have to 'liquidate' the period dominated by 'Economism', and where there is a liquidation it is always necessary to define what is an *asset* and what is a *liability*: otherwise it will be incorrect and unjust.

On the side of the assets, the 'Economist' practicals register an extraordinarily impressive figure for socialists: their aim, indicated above, of converting socialism from the business of circles to that of the whole class. This impressive figure covers a significant part of their *debt*. The other, perhaps no less weighty figure, is the fact that they, 'Economist'-*practicals*, immediately renounced their *theoretical* spokesmen as soon as they saw what sort of practical conclusions they drew from their 'criticism of Marx'. In this connection, the exploits of the French *Millerandistes* and the German Bernsteinians had a very sobering effect on them, and after that, the only thing that remained was to take that step which they had not, unfortunately, been able to take at the moment of their appearance on the stage of history: that of *becoming 'orthodox' Marxists*. Many of them have already become this. *And these are the kind of people with whom we now need to come to an understanding*. We not only do not have the right to call them *enemies*, but not even *opponents*: *they are our comrades, though they are distinguished from us by certain shades of thought*. These sort of shades harm no-one. On the contrary, one can say without any exaggeration that, where they disappear, thought has itself turned into an ossified dogma and has completely ceased to function.

In the publications of the so-called Party of the so-called Socialist Revolutionaries,<sup>9</sup> we do not notice any disagreements; in this connection 'all is well'. But who actually takes this 'Party' seriously, apart from several naïve youngsters lacking the most elementary notion of socialism and revolution?

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9 The Party of Socialist Revolutionaries ('Essars') was a non-Marxist agrarian socialist Party heavily influenced by the ideas of 'People's Will'. It traced its origins back to a circle in Saratov in 1894, which initially co-operated with members of 'People's Will' and which published its own programme in 1896. The following year the circle transferred to Moscow, where it adopted the name of 'Northern Union of Socialist Revolutionaries', later the 'Union of Socialist Revolutionaries'. Groups subsequently emerged in several Russian cities, but those in the 'southern' and the 'northern' regions formed two separate organisations until their merger at the beginning of 1902, at which point the 'Essar' Party is considered to have been founded. From 1900, an émigré committee was also in existence and the newspaper, *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, started to appear in the same year as the publication of the northern 'Union of Socialist Revolutionaries'.

Therefore, when Plekhanov refers to Socialist Revolutionary publications he is probably referring to *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*.

The absence of any serious mental effort constitutes the main distinguishing feature of all its manifold literary output. Our Party must not become like this. If conflict signifies that something is *not* well, then we Social Democrats are not fated to be well. In our cause, more than any other, *conflict is the father of all things*, to use the words of an ancient Greek philosopher.<sup>10</sup> It is very likely that *at the current time* we will have to argue with one or another of those comrades who have *previously* acted as 'Economists' in practice. *But our possible arguments with them should not prevent a full comradely rapprochement between us.*

This *rapprochement* is now one of the most important practical questions for us. The number of our irreconcilable enemies – the number of conscious enemies of the revolutionary aims of the proletariat – grows with every day, and cannot but grow at an increasing rate. We must stop dividing our forces. We have already outgrown the swaddling clothes of the circle-period of our existence, which always dreadfully narrowed people's political horizons and made them capable of separating on the basis of paltry reasons. We became the most influential political party in our country, and political influence places *obligations* on us that are no less than those of the *nobility*. All of us without exception – both yesterday's 'Economists' and the current 'politicals' – should settle their former differences and together set about new *joint* work within the broad framework of the new Party organisation in which space can be found for the most diverse of talents and the most differing inclinations. And we should all, without exception, look upon *disorder* as a serious *political crime*. Irreconcilability in relation to the enemies of the working class, patience in relation to its friends, our comrades – this is the motto to which we all unfailingly hold firm, we soldiers of the revolutionary army of labour. Enough infighting! We need unity!

The former 'Economist' practicals now, of course, no less than before, insist on the necessity of our permanently broadening the scope of the socialist movement and of supporting the working masses in their day-to-day economic struggle with their exploiters. But who among us doubts the great theoretical and practical significance of this idea? True, certain 'politicals' went too far in their reaction against 'Economism' and conducted purely *political* agitation. This was a mistake which our newspaper has already pointed out, the repetition of which will become all the less likely, the more mutual comradely influence between 'politicals' and 'Economists' is established. We will also allow that a certain 'Economist' one-sidedness could perhaps be not without use

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10 Presumably Heraclitus (c. 535–475 BCE), whose views are sometimes seen as an important precursor to dialectical materialism.

now, in the capacity of a counterweight against the extremity of those fascinated by 'purely political' struggle.

As regards organisational questions, agreement here perhaps seems to us much more difficult if we recollect all those disputes which took place between the 'Economists' and the 'politicals' concerning 'democratism' in the organisation. But here too we need to begin by liquidating old disputes, old polemical enthusiasm and old one-sidedness, in consequence of which our 'Economists', it seems, sometimes forgot about the fact that we had to operate in the most vile of police states existing anywhere in the world, whilst our 'politicals' sometimes appeared to let slip from view the fact that our goal is *the class movement of the proletariat* and is not in the least *a conspiracy of an intelligentsia convinced that the workers are necessary for the revolution*, as the late Lev Tikhomirov used to say.<sup>11</sup> In any case, we are firmly convinced that with the presence of good will on both sides, they could, without in the least hindering one another, work hand in hand and in the very best of agreements, based on the constitution worked out by the Second Congress of our Party. This constitution is not without significant flaws. But to the list of its merits belongs that undoubted, though negative, virtue that *it presents no obstacle to broad organisational work*. Therefore our comrades – former 'Economists' – would make a great political mistake if they saw in it an insuperable obstacle to a *rapprochement* with the 'politicals'.

To repeat: enough infighting! We need unity!

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11 Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov (1852–1923) was a revolutionary in his youth, a member of 'Land and Freedom' and of the Executive Committee of 'People's Will'. In the mid-1880s he began to break with revolutionary politics, publishing a recantation of his earlier views in 1888. For this, he was pardoned by Alexander III. Subsequently he became both religious and conservative. From 1909–13 he worked as the editor of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, a prestigious, state-owned and highly conservative newspaper with a large circulation in Moscow. Plekhanov's reference to him as 'late' (*pokoynyi*) is eccentric here and presumably refers to his departure from revolutionary politics.

## Letter from the Urals and Plekhanov's 'Centralism or Bonapartism', *Iskra* No. 63 & No. 65

Several months after the publication of Plekhanov's 'What is Not to Be Done' and 'Something on "Economism"', a letter to *Iskra* in the name of three local RSDLP committees was published as a separate supplement to No. 63 (1 April 1904) of the newspaper. This was a critical response to Plekhanov's articles and it appears to have been invited by circulars on the part of both the Central Committee and the Editorial Board, in an attempt to find out the Party membership's attitude to the new ideological leadership of *Iskra*.<sup>1</sup> This letter, which argued that Plekhanov had indeed altered his views following the resignation of Lenin from the Editorial Board, is also of interest in that it offers an unusually direct expression of Leninist organisational thinking, celebrating the virtues of discipline, obedience and a politically monolithic Party. All the most authoritarian implications of Lenin's thinking therefore seem to be highlighted in it, implications which are not clearly balanced, as is so often the case of Lenin's own writings, by a clear commitment to freedom of expression and the accountability of the Party leadership to the membership via the Party Congress.

The 'Letter from Representatives of the Ufa, Mid-Urals and Perm Committees' begins with a protest against the perceived change in Plekhanov's attitude to the anti-*Iskra* trends in the Russian Social Democracy since the Second Congress of the RSDLP, and especially against his notion that the Party has anything to learn from the practices of the 'Economists' regarding involvement in mass social struggles. The authors of the 'Letter' argue that it was actually the 'orthodox' Marxists of the St. Petersburg 'Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class' who first broke away from the 'circle-propaganda' practices of the 1880s and early 1890s and initiated economic agitation,<sup>2</sup> practices which groups such as Rabochee Delo and Rabochaia Mysl' merely sought to imitate at a later stage, once the 'orthodox Marxists' had already recognised the limitations of 'Economism' when viewed as a revolutionary strategy. Thus, the service to the Party Plekhanov attributes to the 'former Economists' is interpreted as spurious,

<sup>1</sup> These appeals have not been located and their precise purpose and content is unclear.

<sup>2</sup> A significant amount of evidence supporting the claim is to be found in: Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 29–72, pp. 81–6, pp. 122–8; Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 121–220.



*and the authors of the letter conclude that Plekhanov is in fact moving towards a Rabochee Delo-type position.*

*To add weight to this contention, they identify a connection between Plekhanov's self-consciously relaxed attitude to Party discipline in the post-Second RSDLP Congress period and 'Economist' views on organisation. They allude to the idea expressed by Lenin in What Is To Be Done? that those concerned only with 'economic' propaganda and agitation would create fairly primitive, decentralised organisational structures, so as to be as responsive as possible to local issues, whereas revolutionary Social Democrats required centralised organisations so as to co-ordinate mass whole-class actions and, ultimately, a nation-wide uprising against the autocracy.<sup>3</sup> However, this argument could be seen as doubtful when applied to Plekhanov given that he, whilst evidently showing a more tolerant attitude toward the activities of the Martovite opposition than Lenin, did not appear to have violated the Party constitution and does not appear to have argued for its revision. Not only this, in contrast to the rest of the Martovites, he continued to express his support for Lenin's version of paragraph one of this constitution, which demanded that all Party members played an active role in the Party's centralised apparatus.<sup>4</sup> Against this, it could be said that Plekhanov, whilst defending the Lenin constitution 'in principle', was prepared to tolerate considerable violations of it 'in practice' in order to obtain peace in the Party.*

*The authors of the 'Letter' then outline their own organisational views. They contend that, rather than 'representing' the different groupings in the Party or reflecting their views, the leading bodies of the Party should represent a homogeneous political viewpoint. This is justified with the claim that a political leadership containing different trends is incapable of acting decisively and can only bring about disaster in a revolutionary situation where decisive action is necessary, some rather questionable historical examples being cited in defence of this argument. It is argued that this homogeneous Party leadership should have more or less unlimited rights in relation to the lower ranks of the Party: the Party's Central Committee has the right to know everything that happens, the right to dissolve organisations and replace personnel, whilst unquestioning obedience to it is expected from the Party rank-and-file. The Party newspaper, meanwhile, must use the information communicated to it exclusively as raw material in the exposition of its own world view, thus educating the Party membership in this world view through a mass of concrete examples. The result, seemingly, should be a*

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3 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 440–91.

4 This is made clear in Plekhanov's reply to the 'Letter', 'Centralism or Bonapartism', which is discussed and reproduced below.

*homogeneous opinion in the Party as a whole, with factions being discouraged, whilst opponents of revolutionary Marxism should without doubt be driven from the Party. In this quasi-military scheme, the ordinary Party members seem to have no clear rights and there appears to be no clear method of challenging ineffective or mistaken decisions on the part of the leadership. Rather, the superior wisdom of the literary and practical leadership of the Party is assumed, even though the case of Plekhanov's apparent 'deviation' towards the views of Rabochee Delo, which is alleged in the 'Letter' itself, seems to speak against such unqualified deference towards leading figures in the Party.*

*This uncompromising account of centralism could be said to show why elements within the Martovite faction had reservations regarding the Leninists, leading to fears of a 'state of siege' or a dictatorship of some sort within the Party gaining currency among them. At the same time, the organisational views expressed here are a less than faithful replica of Lenin's own arguments, reflecting them in an unduly dogmatic and one-sided manner. If Lenin expressed a preference for a homogeneous pro-Iskra Party leadership at the Second RSDLP Congress, then this preference was dependent on Iskra having the support of a clear majority of delegates at the meeting. When this majority seemed to be threatened, as it was in the Iskra caucus meetings, Lenin actually proved pragmatic and was prepared to include opponents in a compromise slate in an attempt to secure a politically credible, if scarcely homogeneous, leadership.<sup>5</sup>*

*Lenin's view of the Party newspaper is likewise more nuanced than the one expressed by his supporters from the Urals, and he evidently viewed it not just as medium through which the established Party position on every possible issue should be expounded. For Lenin, the newspaper was also a venue for debate between all the different trends within the Party, which should allow differences to be aired and resolved, a feature which becomes obvious when the columns of Iskra, both before and after the Second Congress, are considered. During the struggles over places in the leadership, Lenin repeatedly appealed for this type of literary exchange in place of direct-action methods such as boycotts and factional*

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5 See Pavlovich's account of the Second RSDLP Congress – Chapter 16 of the collection – as well as Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 28–9, p. 120, pp. 276–86. It might be objected that these are partisan accounts designed to present Lenin's behaviour at the caucus meetings in the most positive light, but it is interesting to note that the claims made here were not challenged at the Second Congress of the League Abroad, where the events of the Second RSDLP Congress were reviewed at great length. See Smidovich 1904, pp. 37–68, especially pp. 49–51, where the presence of a 'compromise list' is explicitly discussed and Martov notably fails to deny its existence.

organisations.<sup>6</sup> The 'Letter' itself seems to serve as a good example of this practice and its appearance can by no means be considered an exception: right from the very beginning, *Iskra* carried a certain amount of such material regardless of the precise composition of the Editorial Board.<sup>7</sup>

Plekhanov replied to this letter with the article 'Centralism or Bonapartism', which appeared in *Iskra* No. 65 (1 May). From the point of view of its rich pallet of rhetorical devices and its style, which contrasts with the often disjointed prose of his opponent and his own previous contributions to the debate between the Martovites and the Leninists, this article is evidently of great interest.

In his reply, Plekhanov defends himself against the charge of inconsistency in relation to revisionism and 'Economism' by drawing a clear distinction between the leaders of such trends and their former followers, as he did in 'Something on "Economism"'. Thus he more or less convincingly reconciles his demand for the expulsion of the followers of Bernstein from the German Social Democrats noted by the authors of the 'Letter' with his support for reconciliation within the RSDLP. However, in his response to the claim of the 'Letter' that he was drifting in the direction of Rabochee Delo thinking, Plekhanov appears to retreat into fictions in order to justify his position. As with 'Something On "Economism"', he introduces the canard of an excessively 'political' tendency in the recent history of the RSDLP, to which the authors of the 'Letter' are presented as belonging. Thus, as previously, and in a fairly childish manner, Plekhanov appears to be declaring that all those seeing a turn towards 'Economism' in his writing must by this very fact be extreme 'politicals'. He then exacerbates this disrespectful treatment of his opponent by alleging that they were formerly enthusiastic supporters of the 'Economist' trend whilst failing to cite any evidence in support of this claim. Then, in the last few paragraphs of the article, Plekhanov echoes and develops one of the concerns raised by the letter of the Mining and Metallurgical Union that is reproduced in Martov's State of Siege concerning the Party constitution: the apparent right of the Central Committee to either remove troublesome opponents from the local committees or to dissolve entire local committees which had

6 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 66–8, pp. 120–1, and p. 146.

7 See *Iskra* No. 8, p. 6 (the Bund's reply to the article in *Iskra* No. 7 about the Fourth Congress of the Bund); *Iskra* No. 9, pp. 1–2 (a declaration of an 'Independent Jewish Workers' Party' in Minsk, which is subject to an editorial reply); *Iskra* No. 25, pp. 3–4 (criticism from a group of Social Democrats from an unnamed southern town of points in the *Iskra-Zaria* programme); Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 114–18 (Lenin's reply to Plekhanov's article 'What Is Not To Be Done?'); *Iskra* No. 60, p. 8 (resolutions in support of the 'Leninist' Central Committee following criticism of it in *Iskra*).

*expressed disagreement with the leadership. In a convincing manner, Plekhanov shows how this power could be used to pack a future Congress of the Party with supporters of the Central Committee, thus utterly undermining the control of the rank-and-file over the leadership and putting an end to internal Party democracy in any meaningful sense.*

*This said, Plekhanov does not appear to convert his advantage on this last question into a convincing case proving that Lenin was actually trying to usurp power in the Party in the manner of a 'Bonapartist'. Whilst his vision of a future Congress 'packed' with Lenin supporters is an intriguing one, it seems to bear little relation to the actual campaign Lenin was waging for a Third RSDLP Congress at around the time 'Centralism or Bonapartism' was published. This initially involved seeking resolutions in favour of a new Congress in both the Party Council and the Central Committee.<sup>8</sup> When these attempts failed, the Leninists actually began to canvass for support among local committees, requesting resolutions in favour of a new Congress with the aim of securing such resolutions from the 50 percent of official committees which, according to the Party constitution, would oblige the Party Council to concede the demand.<sup>9</sup> Owing to the opposition of the Martovites to a new Congress at this stage,<sup>10</sup> it seems likely that Plekhanov is referring to this type of campaign when he criticises the use of allegedly Bonapartist 'plebiscites', giving the rather false impression that Lenin aimed at some kind of extraordinary ballot which was to be rushed through in an attempt to legitimise an unconstitutional seizure of power in the Party. In reality, Lenin was acting in a manner explicitly provided for in the Party constitution, seeking a well-organised majority in the Party with which to pursue his goals, much as was the case with the Russian Iskra organisation in the period prior to the Second RSDLP Congress. Plekhanov's remarks about 'Bonapartism' seem to reflect a growing scepticism on his part towards Party Congresses in general, and a growing hostility to the idea of an elected leadership in the RSDLP that should be held accountable to the Party's rank-and-file. This naturally poses the question of his own commitment to Party democracy, which appears to have been less unwavering than that of Lenin.*

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8 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, p. 152, pp. 177–8, pp. 424–9.

9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 489–93, pp. 521–6 and pp. 538–40.

10 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 177–8.

## Letter to *Iskra* from Representatives of the Ufa, Mid-Urals and Perm Committees

We are taking advantage of both the official invitation on the part of the Editorial Board of the central Party newspaper made in a letter circulated around the committees, and the invitation issued by the Central Committee urging us to satisfy the Editorial Board's wish, in order to express our views on a certain question.<sup>11</sup> We are referring to *Iskra* up to No. 53 inclusive. Unfortunately, we do not yet have the supplement to No. 53 – the Party rules and the resolutions of the Party Congress or the minutes – though we were told about them through word of mouth.

Congress endorsed *Iskra* and confirmed its role as that of the central Party newspaper. The idea behind this decision was clear: *Iskra* was to be the same tendency in the future as it was prior to the Congress. This was clearly more or less what the old Editorial Board thought, judging by its declaration concerning the changes which had taken place within it. But did matters end up this way? The article, 'What is Not to Be Done?', (No. 52) and the leading article of No. 53<sup>12</sup> show that *Iskra* changed its views on the Economists and the revisionists as soon as Lenin had left the Editorial Board. As proof of the turn taking place, we note first of all the views expressed in the old *Iskra*. In No. 49, in the leading article, 'A Red Congress in a Red Country',<sup>13</sup> the harm being caused to

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11 These documents have not been located.

12 This was the unsigned article 'Our Congress'. See Chapter 18, footnote 13.

13 This article was written by Plekhanov and dealt with the Dresden (1903) Congress of the German Social Democrats. The 'Red Country' in question was Saxony, where 22 out of 23 Reichstag seats were at that time occupied by Social Democrats, and Plekhanov appears to have judged the Congress 'red' owing to its resolution against the revisionist views of Eduard Bernstein. The Dresden Congress did not expel Bernstein and Plekhanov appears to regret this in his article, observing that it had probably under-estimated the danger represented by revisionist views, and arguing in favour of the right of parties to expel members. Reflecting Lenin's argument in the first chapter of *What Is To Be Done*, Plekhanov argues that this right does not contradict the right to freedom of expression so long as the expelled member is free to express his or her views outside the Party, and he insists that all members of the Party must support all the main points of the Party's programme. Plekhanov goes on to observe that the formal resolution against revisionism was really only a moral victory, as known revisionists still held many influential positions in the SPD apparatus, even though the rank-and-file were mostly 'orthodox'. Reflecting on this problem, he argues that revisionism probably entered the Social-Democratic movement as a

the Social-Democratic Party of Germany not only by revisionism but also by revisionists is pointed out, the resolution of the Second Berlin District, which insisted on the expulsion of Bernstein, Göhre<sup>14</sup> and Braun<sup>15</sup> from the Party is welcomed, and the fact that the revisionist Bernstein – who remains in the ranks of the Party – will still cause it a lot of trouble is pointed out. In this article, the far-sightedness of a certain Russian Social Democrat who indicated the serious danger threatening the Party in the form of Bernstein ('Bernstein will bury Social Democracy or Social Democracy will bury Bernstein') from the beginning, many years ago, is noted.<sup>16</sup> This Russian Social Democrat recommended decisive measures against the revisionists. The article also views Kautsky's 'rubbery resolution',<sup>17</sup> which was adopted by the International Socialist Congress in Paris and which took an altogether too courteous attitude to the revisionists and to revisionism, with regret. We should note that No. 49 was one of the issues edited exclusively by Plekhanov and Lenin, the size of the old Editorial Board having been significantly reduced, but this did not have the least influence on the newspaper's line. The thoughts expressed in No. 49 fully corresponded to those we read earlier regarding the present question in *Iskra* and *Zaria*.

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result of intellectuals joining the Party and acquiring leading positions in it owing to their specialised training. He claims that this corps of educated personnel proved necessary to the Social-Democratic movement but that it was also susceptible to bourgeois prejudices acquired as a result of university education, which made it relate critically towards Marxism. Plekhanov notes the German policy of insisting that every 'academic' serve his or her time in the rank-and-file before being awarded a Party post with approval, but adds that this policy would not work if it were not accompanied by a direct challenge to bourgeois prejudices in the form of a struggle for correct theory in the Party, a negligence towards which would merely assist the growth of revisionism. Perhaps significantly, he does not raise the issue of training workers to do specialised Party tasks by the Party itself, through specialised own schools, institutes and the like, which might have enabled the Party to dispense with the services of the bourgeois intelligentsia in the long term.

14 Paul Göhre (1864–1928) was a Protestant pastor and theologian who joined the German Social Democrats. He worked in a factory in order to write a book about his experiences there: *Three Months in a Workshop: A Practical Study* (Göhre 1895).

15 The 'Braun' in question could be Lily Braun (1865–1916) who was on the right of the Party and who was married to Heinrich Braun (1854–1927), who also held revisionist views.

16 See Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 2, p. 351.

17 See the following note.

We recall Plekhanov's report on the International Congress in Paris,<sup>18</sup> the article in *Zaria* on *Vorwärts* and so on.<sup>19</sup> With the departure of Lenin, *Iskra* immediately turned on its heel. The ink with which Lenin wrote and taught us about what great harm would be done to the Party by its internal enemies – revisionists, opportunists and Economists – had not yet dried before *Iskra* had gone and written about tact, softness, love of peace and leniency in relation to these internal enemies. Economists became former so-called Economists, comrades still not entirely orthodox but giving cause for great hopes, comrades who had not broken with their bad former habits but who were mending their ways. Will it be possible to regard Economists so cordially from now on? Are these really the youngest sons of the Party, weak, still not sufficiently strengthened, still demanding love and attention? It would seem that, following the Congress and the unification of the Party, and following the recognition of the

18 See *Zaria* No. 1 pp. 231–9/Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 103–17. In this article Plekhanov, who was one of the Russian delegates to the Congress, describes a division between a 'Montagne' and a 'Gironde' in international Social Democracy, owing to the recent entry of the French socialist parliamentarian François Millerand (1859–1943) into the French ministerial cabinet, and the emergence of Bernsteinian revisionism in Germany. Plekhanov argues against any attempt to reconcile these new right-wing trends with Marxism, supporting the outright split in the French socialists between the leftist followers of Jules Guesde (1845–1922), who opposed participation in bourgeois governments in any guise, and the followers of Jean Jaurès (1859–1914), who supported close parliamentary collaboration with left republicanism.

At the Paris (1900) Congress of the Second International, Plekhanov sided with Guesde in this dispute (which was finally resolved through the reunification of the two sides in 1905 as the *Section Française de l'internationale Ouvrière*) and tried unsuccessfully to get a resolution passed forbidding participation in bourgeois governments. In the article, Plekhanov describes how this initiative was defeated, his opponents arguing that coalition between bourgeois and socialist political parties could at times be justified as a short-term tactical manoeuvre to prevent reactionaries taking power, and by way of exception, but not as a means of achieving state power on behalf of the proletariat. Kautsky's alternative resolution expressing these arguments was accepted in so far as it allowed participation in coalitions in this 'tactical' sense, providing that the socialist ministers held themselves accountable to their parties. This resolution was viewed with disappointment by Plekhanov, who saw it as a compromise designed to protect the Jaurès faction from criticism.

19 See *Zaria* No. 4, Section 2, pp. 101–18. This article was centred on material written by Krichevskii, in his role as the Paris correspondent for the central newspaper of the German Social Democracy, *Vorwärts*, which defended the followers of Jaurès and Millerand whilst criticising the Guesdists (see the previous note for details of these factions). The first part is signed by one 'Ignotus', whom Lih identifies as Martov (Lih 2006, p. 296), the second by Parvus.



principles, the programme and the organisational and tactical plan of *Iskra* and *Zaria* by the great majority as 'Party', there were more essential tasks to address than the question of little groups (as *Iskra* itself put it) of former revisionists and former Economists and the question of their rehabilitation.

At first sight, it seems simply incomprehensible why there is this need to write about former revisionists and Economists if, despite the decisive, open and relentless struggle against their views, despite the sharp tone (or, to be more exact, thanks to all of this) they all the same came to us, agreed with us and adopted our views. As far as we are concerned, they are no longer former Economists, nor former opportunists, they are revolutionary Social Democrats.

But no, not only do they write about the formerly unorthodox comrades, it is proposed that we take lessons from them. The Economist-practicals, you see, directed all their thoughts towards the working masses, towards their needs, and it is not always possible to speak about politics. Politics sinned, we discover, with abstraction, with isolation from the real life and daily needs of the proletariat.

Is this so in reality?

If the Economist-practicals went to the workers and, thinking about their defects, tried to influence the masses, then we recall (check this in the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?*) that the Economists only continued – in a poor and narrow fashion – the cause which was initiated in 1894–6 by such organisations as the 'Union of Struggle' in Piter and the 'Moscow Workers' Union'.

These organisations went down the road which led to the First Congress and its *Manifesto*.

If we must take lessons, then it is better to take them not from narrow Economist-imitators but from the original. The abstraction and isolation from the masses being ascribed to politics would have been better linked to the circle-period of our history – this would have been more accurate. Putting the politicals on the same shelf as the Economists, the error is nonetheless made that the Economists and the worst politicals are presented as comparable. But normally you cannot make comparisons in this manner. If we take the best Economists and opportunists and their spokesmen, and the best politicals and their spokesmen, then on one side of the scales we have *Rabochaia Mysl'* and *Rabochee Delo*, and on the other, *Rabotnik*, *Rabochaia Gazeta*, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii*, *Iskra* and *Zaria*. Now, like the innocent Queen Bianca in Heine's *Dispute*, *Iskra* discovers that both the politicals and the Economists stink.<sup>20</sup> *Iskra* used to be

20 Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) was a radical German-Jewish lyric poet and sometime friend of Marx. The poem, 'Disputation', first appeared in Heine's three-poem volume *Hebrew Melodies*, itself the third and final section of a larger collection, *Romanzero* (Heine 1905).

distinguished, and its honours were not those of the non-commissioned officer's wife.<sup>21</sup>

How then to explain the historic turn, *Iskra's* new course? In the following way, we think. If they write about trying to rehabilitate Economists and tailists, and if in this they sin against the truth, and if the ghost of the word 'split' can be seen haunting the pillars of *Iskra*, then the matter is clear. Yesterday's Economists and tailists are in no sense the Benjamins they pretend to be, but notorious seekers after sympathy. This is a case of a wolf in sheep's clothing. Russian Economists and tailists are no better than German ones. Like those and many others besides, having lost a battle fought out in the open, they are now fighting with partisan methods. They are ready, when they are in a minority, to submit to any censure, rebuke or slap in the face as long as this does not prevent them from remaining in the Party, from permeating all its cracks and from continuing its destructive work. (Of course, it is good organisation which gives them this possibility and it is a fine sort of central Party newspaper Editorial Board which approves of such organisation and wishes to copy it.) And to do them justice, these moles have dug their underground passages well. The Economists entered the Party in order to bring it down from within. They decided to use a cause and an organisation founded by their enemies for their tailist goals. They decided to imbue *Iskra* itself with their spirit and its venom. At the Congress, they called themselves *Iskra*-ites in the manner of chamaeleons and facilitated the insertion of contradictions into the organisational rules – they even managed to exert influence on the political character of the central Party newspaper. To repeat, these moles dug their underground passage around Plekhanov very well: the weak-willed editors who replaced Lenin in the Editorial Board drove Plekhanov from his position and he began to write something about Economism and the Economists in a spirit that was completely new to him. The revisionists can congratulate themselves on a brilliant victory – they finally outflanked and then tamed a most irreconcilable and energetic opponent. And with what delicacy this was done! It was as if the Economists

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The poem concerns theological disputes between Jews and Christians in fourteenth-century Castille. At one point, Queen Bianca de Bourbon expresses her contempt for both sides in this doctrinal conflict and in doing so appears to reflect the poet's own views.

- 21 This is a reference to Gogol's play, *The Government Inspector* (Gogol 1994b). A minor character, the non-commissioned officers' widow, complains that she has been beaten by the mayor of the town, who denies the accusation, falsely and absurdly claiming that 'she beat herself'. Since then, a reference to 'the honour of the non-commissioned officer's widow' has been used in Russian to express the idea of someone who is their own worst enemy. Thus, the authors of the letter defend *Iskra's* tough stance against the 'Economists' as something which intelligently served *Iskra's* own cause.

had nothing to do with it: the board more or less said this officially. Whoever is organising things backstage, the audience has failed to notice him. The public opinion of the Party is in complete bewilderment. Why did this happen? Why did this Lenin leave? Lenin! How was he able to make up his mind to release the Editorial Board of the central Party newspaper from his grip when it had been entrusted to him and Plekhanov? Something very bad is being done . . .

Not knowing the reason for Lenin's departure from the Editorial Board, considering it plain harmful for the cause, and in the absence of explanations, all that remains is the positive conclusion that an enemy who was previously lurking in a concealed position has now been discovered, thanks to the departure of Lenin. The cards are on the table, the true intentions of the 'Minority' are known to the Party. . . . Sound your cymbals, friends of *Rabochee Delo*, celebrate your victory! *Rabochee Delo* is dead, long live *Rabochee Delo*!

What is at issue is not the name of a publication but its opinions. The new opinions of *Iskra* on the question of Party organisation have become '*Rabochee Delo*-ist'. Did not *Rabochee Delo* rise up in rebellion against the sectarianism and fanaticism of the opinions of Social Democracy and against the ability to consistently put these opinions into practice, in favour of tolerance towards things that were not properly assimilated by it? Did not *Rabochee Delo* write about the need of the entire Party to bunch together, believing that the extreme bearing an economic character would be cancelled out by an opposite extreme and that the Party would have to find an equilibrium between all its tendencies? Did not *Rabochee Delo* protest against the accusations against it of Economism and its being confused with *Rabochaia Mysl'*? Did not *Rabochee Delo* find the criticism of *Iskra* to be carping, nitpicking and based on misunderstandings, and did it not declare that its debts to the 'Emancipation of Labour' group were a private matter?<sup>22</sup> We always maintained that the truth was not on the side of *Rabochee Delo* but on the side of *Iskra*; we thought that *Iskra* put an end to disorder and vacillation in the theory and practice of Social Democracy; we reckoned that

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22 The 'debts' in question probably relate to a dispute between the Union Abroad and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group concerning the Union's printing press, which had originally been donated to the former group by the latter. With the departure of Plekhanov's supporters from the Union in April 1900, the question of who owned this press became a matter of controversy, Plekhanov demanding its return in accordance with certain statutes of the Union, whilst the leadership of the Union refused to do this. The matter appears to have been resolved only with the dissolution of both groups at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, as a result of which the pro-*Rabochee Delo* members of the Union were instructed to join the pro-*Iskra* League Abroad, which the Congress had earlier declared to be the RSDLP's new official émigré organisation. The 'Emancipation of Labour' group had formed part of the League since its foundation in October 1901.

emphasising the opportunistic tendencies and the inconsistency of *Rabochee Delo* and bringing them to light taught us what was to be done and what was not to be done; we thought that the bankruptcy of *Rabochee Delo* consisted in the fact that it did not teach the Party – rather, the Party taught it. Now, when *Iskra*'s mind is sufficiently clear, it proves possible for it to advocate Party unity – precisely now, the latest composition of the Editorial Board advises us to return to the old state of affairs. It turns out that something of an unnecessary fuss had been made, and that it was possible to have remained in the company of Krichevskii, Akimov and Martynov after all. The Party, we now find out, is not a circle, the Party deals with the masses and people who, though they subscribe to the programme and the rules, are still not capable of entirely adopting our views, of getting the hang of the views of proletarian socialists, should be allowed to join the Party. We need to reckon with this. With these people we must use softness and tact – we must not frighten them away. This is an old song in a new key. The misfortune of *Rabochee Delo*, as with opportunists in general, is that it cannot act tactically and to speak of tact is beside the point. The inadequate, out-of-place and self-contradictory character of the leading article, 'What is Not to Be Done?', is very well described in Lenin's letter to the Editorial Board (No. 53):<sup>23</sup> with just one concise account of this article, he compelled the Editorial Board to immediately modify something in it, something he caused to be expressed more precisely. And the Editorial Board did not notice (and perhaps closed its eyes to the fact) that it was arguing not with Lenin but with itself, and that Lenin was here adopting his customary tactic of posing a question point-blank, and of forcing his opponent from an ambiguous position with just one question.

In general, the leading article in No. 52 is full of wise maxims: thus it seems that the parting words of *Iskra* to the CC . . .<sup>24</sup> are taken from Polonius's valediction to the passionate young Laertes.<sup>25</sup> But *Iskra* forgot one wise maxim: there are such things which are allowed but which should not really be spoken about. Sometimes one has to turn a blind eye to infringements of discipline, recommending leniency – and *Iskra* recognises this – at a time when the Party is insufficiently disciplined and needs disciplining: is it not obvious that this

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23 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 114–17.

24 Words indecipherable [note by *Iskra*'s editors].

25 This occurs in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act i, Scene iii (Shakespeare 1985). Polonius is the aged father of Laertes, who is about to depart for Paris to complete his education and the speech, intended as advice, is notable for its platitudinous advice and statements of the obvious.

is wise and tactical? How typical of Possiblism<sup>26</sup> and tailism<sup>27</sup> is this misunderstanding of Party tasks! The links between the proposed organisational plan and its goals are not coincidental, though they are not often admitted. Take Economism as an example. If the Economists did not care about the creation of an all-Russian organisation, then this was because they did not set themselves all-Russian goals. A certain reduction in the working day, more pay and so on can be obtained and really is obtained under the autocracy through strikes, through uncoordinated, semi-spontaneous struggle. The Economists considered the leadership of this struggle alone to be sufficient.

It is understood that, for this goal, what is needed is a good local professional organisation and not a complicated all-Russian apparatus of proletarian revolutionaries. In order to conduct a mere pure-economic strike there is no special need for good socialist literature, one can get by with home-made proclamations calling for solidarity – and this alone.

Energetic and decisive local workers, though only half-conscious, can enter the leadership of a strike. These workers can know the shop, the trade, the factory and because they are popular, they can be elected. The role of the revolutionary intelligentsia in the professional movement is a passive one. The intelligentsia only formulates the wishes of the worker, composes and prints proclamations and collects money. Local workers lead the movement. It is understood that the Economists organise workplace-related campaign funds and that they want an elected leadership and a democratic organisation. They look down on the intelligentsia, on the revolutionary Social Democracy, whose committees lead a miserable existence. And everywhere workers' professional organisation is founded on a democratic basis with elective principles. Look at the English trade unions – they have no all-English goals. Only the necessity of entering the arena of political struggle – the appearance of political goals – has compelled them to think about an all-English workers' organisation in

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26 The 'Possibilists' were the reformist faction of the French Workers' Party, the Marxist Party formed by Guesde and Paul Lafargue (1842–1911) in 1880. Led by Paul Brousse (1844–1912), the faction emerged in 1882 and split the Party. In 1902, the 'Possibilists' joined the French Socialist Party which united several groupings under the reformist leadership of Jaures, who supported a long-term alliance with the non-socialist republican left. This group in turn merged with the Guesdists in 1905 to form the *Section Française de l'internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO), a broad church Social-Democratic Party.

27 This term referred to those who were at the 'tail' of the workers' movement rather than its 'head': the section which follows established trends rather than innovates and develops the movement.

recent years – a political Party.<sup>28</sup> From pure Economism we turn to opportunism. If *Rabochee Delo* was a partisan of democratic organisational principles, then this was in harmony with the tasks it set itself. Practically and in reality, *Rabochee Delo* went down the road of Economism, though formally speaking it had political and socialist goals in its sights. And the workplace-orientated practice was only weakly connected with attempts-in-vain at politics. Wishing to swim with the current, it imagined the Russian political revolution as the Possibilists of other countries imagine the socialist revolution – as an unending series of steps, of stages, each with its goal, each with its tactics. The workers' movement proceeds as it should. Every committee acts in accordance with the stage in which it finds itself. Yesterday the committee was pure-economic, tomorrow it will try to be as political as local forces permit. In either case, the committee acts independently. It believes that it, better than any alien central organisation, understands its own tasks. The main reason it needs a Central Committee is for the latter's services. The Central Committee is a good transporter, a good central-information bureau. The committees of the *Rabochee Delo* era were completely autonomous. Local committees related to the Central Committee as shop-floor organisations related to the local committee. Neither local nor Central Committees led the workers' movement, they served it. Thus both the committees and *Rabochee Delo* were caught off guard by the unexpected political upsurge, and they showed their bankruptcy. They belatedly started to make a historic turn.

The proletarian political struggle could not have been foreseen by autonomous committees of autonomous shop organisations; these could not and would not have known how to prepare themselves because proletarian political struggle is not the local affair of a workplace-based organisation. Only an all-Russian centralised organisation of revolutionaries which has the local committees at its complete disposal, committees which in their turn are not merely pure-workplace organisations of struggle but organisations of revolutionary proletarians, only such an organisation can foresee the proletarian

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28 In February 1900, the Labour Representation Committee was founded with the aim of securing an organised body of trade-union backed Members of Parliament in Britain. It received the support of several pre-existing socialist organisations, including the Social-Democratic Federation, a Marxist organisation, the more ideologically diffuse Independent Labour Party and the intellectual-reformist Fabian Society. However, its main base of support was the trade unions. The Labour Party emerged as a parliamentary group in 1906, but only as Party with a distinct extra-parliamentary membership in 1918. Prior to this date, the Party's rank-and-file 'members' actually belonged either to trade unions or to the socialist organisations which supported the parliamentary group, but which retained their independent identities.

political struggle, can be prepared for it and can go ahead of the masses. Both committees and individual members of the Party can be invested with very broad powers, but this should depend on the Central Committee. Conversely, the Central Committee can – if it needs to and if it finds this useful – use its authority to dissolve a committee or another organisation and it can deprive one or another member of the Party of his rights. Otherwise it is impossible to successfully organise proletarian struggle. Of course, we imagine the Central Committee to be a collective of the most experienced, the most energetic and the most battle-hardened fighters, the wisest and most experienced adherents of the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Consequently, they can be allowed to go into every detail of our activity and they can, and should, be allowed to take on the broadest possible powers. It is understood that the Possibilists and tailists, for whom a central organisation in the form of an information and transportation bureau is sufficient, will, we repeat, be in favour of concentrating all tendencies within the Party in the central organisation: their central organisation does not direct, and should not go ahead of, the working masses. If the role of a central organisation is passive, then it may have representatives of all Party tendencies and stages in it – the Economists, revisionists, Possibilists and revolutionary Social Democrats.

For a transporter or a member of an information bureau, the opinions of one's comrades are not important. This is not the case in an organisation of proletarian revolutionaries. If the central organisation teaches us to fight and directs the struggle for proletarian socialism, then there will be no permanent, stable tendencies in the Party, no definite division of it into a rival majority and minority, no pressure from one part of the Party to another. The central organisation should consist of an extremely close-knit and homogenous group that is entirely of one mind both in thought and in action. Otherwise the cart will be drawn by a swan, a crab and a pike.<sup>29</sup> If the Party is not divided accidentally, but permanently into majority and minority, if one part fears being stifled and is not inclined to willingly submit to a naturally-formed central organisation with a certain composition, then this means that representatives of different classes of the population have somehow or other entered into the

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29 This is a reference to a fable 'The Swan, the Pike and the Crab', in which these three creatures combine their forces in an attempt to move a cart on a riverbank. This fails owing to their disparate modes of locomotion – the swan tries to fly, the crab moves backwards and the pike jumps into the river. The authors of the letter clearly envisage a multi-tendency Central Committee operating in a similar fashion. The fable was written in verse form by Ivan Andeievich Krylov (1769–1844), probably the most celebrated Russian fabulist, in 1814 (Krylov 1946c).



Party, representatives with different and perhaps contradictory ambitions. In this case, certain elements should be detached from the Party, certain organisers should be removed from their posts and so forth, otherwise the activity of the Party will be slowed down and the interests of the most revolutionary, truly proletarian part of the Party will suffer. That is how things stand in Germany. (By the way, the advocates of conglomeration, Possiblism, tailism and the new Editorial Board of *Iskra* point inaccurately to Germany as an example worthy of imitation. 'In Germany', says *Iskra* in No. 53, replying to Lenin's letter, 'the question of the conductor's baton lost its significance in direct proportion to the growth in the class-consciousness of the proletariat. The class-consciousness of the proletariat is unswerving, though it does its work slowly'. *Iskra* considers this clearly opportunist position to be a true sign of the maturity of the Party in organisational matters!)<sup>30</sup>

We repeat, in a Party of the revolutionary proletariat there cannot, and should not, be a permanent division into majority and minority, and any kind of representation of different tendencies in the central organisations is out of the question. If there is a division between more and less experienced and developed members in the Party, then the central organisation should consist of a homogeneous group of the most experienced and developed members of the Party, not of some conglomeration of Party tendencies – there can be no question of this. The more unanimous, energetic and talented the central organisation, the more willingly and naturally will all members and organisations submit to it.

If the Frankfurt parliament<sup>31</sup> represented all the German revolutionary tendencies in 1848, then it was simply a talking shop, incapable of undertaking anything that would aid the success of the revolution. If the Paris Commune of 1871 fell, then the immediate cause of this was the fact that there were differ-

30 This is a paraphrase of words taken from an article by Plekhanov, 'Otvét na pis'mo tov. Lenina' ('Answer to the Letter of Comrade Lenin'), *Iskra* No. 53, p. 8/Plekhanov 1924–7, Vol. 13, pp. 11–13, which served as a reply to Lenin's 'Letter to *Iskra*' (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 114–18).

31 The Frankfurt Parliament was part of the 1848 uprising in the German Confederation, sitting from May 1848–June 1849. It consisted for the most part of indirectly elected representatives from the 39 states of the confederation and it proclaimed a new constitution, a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. As the authors of the article indicate, the parliament played the role of an ineffectual 'talking shop', representing all shades of opinion in society, which was entirely unsuited to decisive revolutionary leadership. It was incapable of putting its decisions into practice owing to its lack of executive and military power and was eventually dissolved by troops supporting the old regime.

ent tendencies in it representing different, partially opposing and contradictory interests.<sup>32</sup> Each one pulled in its own direction and as a result there were many arguments and little action. If the *Montagne* of 1793<sup>33</sup> acted energetically and decisively, then this was because it was homogenous. Even though it perished, it irreversibly and permanently decided the question of revolution. And one must say, not only about Russia, but about the proletariat of the whole world, that it has to prepare, and be prepared, for the realisation of a powerful

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32 The Paris Commune of 18 March–28 May 1871 represented a popular uprising against the infant Third Republic, which was undergoing military defeat and occupation as a result of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1. The commune was dominated by a coalition of petite-bourgeois and working-class socialist forces and a minority of its leaders supported the International Working Men's Association. During its two-month rule, it instituted important democratic and social reforms, including the election of all public officials, the limitation of their salaries to six thousand francs, a sum equivalent to the wage of an average worker, the separation of church from the state and the school system, the expropriation of church lands, free schooling, the cancelling and postponing of debts and rental payments, along with the return of goods from pawnshops, the abolition of interest on debts, the abolition of night work, and the right of workers to take over abandoned enterprises. The article's assessment of the leadership of the Commune is both harsh and simplistic, as it attributes the Commune's defeat almost entirely to the politically diffuse character of this leadership, whilst failing to acknowledge an extremely unfavourable balance of military forces, which allowed Bonapartist troops to first of all surround, cut off, invade and then occupy Paris. Nonetheless, it reflects the fact that criticisms of the Commune's leadership were raised by its pro-International minority faction and by Engels, although these criticisms were undoubtedly expressed in a much more sympathetic and tactful fashion. See: Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 27, pp. 179–92.

33 During the French Revolution, the *Montagne* was the radical left-wing of the Jacobin society, a mass-membership debating society whose participants dominated the French National Convention, the sovereign legislative assembly following the arrest of Louis XVI, from 1793–4. Leaning on the poorest sections of the population for support, they purged the Convention of the politically more cautious and somewhat passive Girondins, carried out widespread terror against these and other opponents, introduced a democratic constitution and achieved considerable military successes against the numerous powers attempting to invade revolutionary France. They were subject to intense internal conflict, as a result of which their various leaders fell victim to an apparatus of terror they themselves had helped to construct, the most notorious aspect of which was the guillotine. As a result of this infighting and their indiscriminate violence towards perceived as well as real enemies of the revolution, they eventually lost support both in the Convention and among the public, and more conservative forces seized their remaining leaders in July 1794 (9 Thermidor II), immediately executing them without trial. Thereafter, the Jacobin club was banned and a long process of reaction and counterrevolution began.

and authoritative organisation. Without a powerful, authoritative, centralised organisation, the proletariat will not be able to direct, and will not be able to utilise the power, which – and we will not have to wait long for this – will one day be at its disposal (and which earlier fell into its hands during the February days in Paris).<sup>34</sup>

Without having its own power, it will not only be unable to realise its maximum goals but also its minimum ones. The preparation of the proletariat for dictatorship is an important organisational task that requires everything else to be subordinated to it. Among other things, this preparation consists in the creation of a mood in favour of a strong, authoritative, proletarian organisation and in the explanation of the general significance of such an organisation. One could object that dictators have appeared and will appear of their own accord. But this has not always been the case and one should not be spontaneous, one should not be opportunistic in a proletarian Party. A high degree of consciousness should be associated with absolute obedience – one should encourage the other (consciousness of necessity is freedom of will). One could also raise the concern that a powerful central organisation might suppress personal initiative and transform members of the Party into pawns. But this is a totally baseless fear. It is precisely this fear which the independent peasant of semi-feudal times felt concerning his loss of integrity and independence on becoming a proletarian.

So, the central organisation and the proletarian-socialist Party in general should be strictly centralised. This is all the more so in Russia, where we have to counteract a centralised police and bureaucratic absolutism, and where this demands the conditions of conspiratorial activity...<sup>35</sup> the organisation of a strictly centralised, conspiratorial Party that is capable of going forward and of guiding this Party with an immediate task which corresponds to its final one.

In our proletarian organisation, we should be very, very careful to make sure that incorrigible and persevering revisionists, opportunists and tailists do not end up in our ranks.

The central organisation in particular must be clear of any under-developed, backward elements, not to mention deep-rooted revisionists and opportunists (unfortunately there is none of this in Germany). If only a little of this noxious weed took root, then it would be a spoonful of tar in a barrel of honey. If the Editorial Board of the 'new' *Iskra* considers such an attitude to greenhorns in

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34 This refers to the uprising of 1848.

35 Words indecipherable, possibly 'among revolutionaries around'.

the Party, Possibilists and Economists, to be a below-the-belt Sobakevich-style<sup>36</sup> attack which is out of place, then we reckon that we should not only 'hit below the belt' in the aforementioned situation, we also say that we do not need to beg forgiveness for it.

It is now clear what, according to our understanding, the relation between the central Party newspaper and the Central Committee should be.

Of course, they should be joined in the closest possible fashion in a proletarian Party. If the central Party newspaper only reflects the different currents in the Party, notes them and appeals to the common opinion of the Party, then it would be an organ of opportunism of the type required by advocates of conglomeration and Possibilism, whereas we propose that the central Party newspaper should prepare the proletariat for an understanding of proletarian goals.

The central Party newspaper should have its own opinion on things, which it should constantly present to its readers. All articles, opinions, observations and information passed to the central newspaper from all the Party organisations and from members serve only as material for elucidating the point of view of the central organisation and for the creation by it of a voluntary, conscious and necessarily unquestioning obedience. We repeat, in a revolutionary proletarian Party there should be full unanimity between the central newspaper and the Central Committee, they should constitute a completely united, close-knit group. We have drifted among enough currents on frail boats and we are building a big, state-of-the-art ship, for which a good captain is necessary. We will sail on it with the current, against the current and on it we will see out storms.

It is time to put an end to organisation by stages: yesterday, circle-organisation; today, the organisation of economic agitation among the masses; tomorrow, the organisation of political agitation and so forth.

Must we really still wait until spontaneity teaches us to understand the need for an organisation which not only serves but directs with an authoritative hand? Did the working class really lose blood, did it really suffer, not only from the blows of the enemy but also from its own weakness and lack of preparation, so that its leaders and organisations might fail to learn to be a better midwife, so that they might fail to learn to become the midwife of history, equipped with knowledge, experience and technique?

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36 See Chapter 19, footnote 21.

## Centralism or Bonapartism? (A New Attempt to Bring Frogs Requesting a King to Reason)<sup>37</sup>

*Why now speak about sharpness?!  
Can one really be calm when it is not the tongue  
But the soul of a man that speaks?  
Impossible! In every man exists a place  
Where it pains him to be touched*<sup>38</sup>

The reader will naturally recall with what humour Alexander Ivanovich Herzen describes, in *My Past and Thoughts*,<sup>39</sup> that fascination with philosophical questions which prevailed in the midst of our advanced Moscow youth of the 1830s. ‘People who loved one another fell out for whole weeks, having disagreed in their definition of the “transcendental spirit” and took offence at opinions about “absolute personality” and its “being-according-to-itself”’.<sup>40</sup> All the most insignificant brochures of German philosophy published in Berlin and different provincial and district towns in which Hegel was so much as mentioned were ordered and read to tatters – until the words were a finger-marked blur and the pages fell apart – in a matter of a few days. The whole of life itself – even in its most insignificant details – was viewed through philosophical spectacles.

37 This is a reference to the fable in which the frogs, who request a king to be sent from heaven, are rewarded first with a log, which they initially fear but subsequently mock, and then with a stork, which eats them. In the present article, Plekhanov refers to a version of the tale told by Ivan Andeevich Krylov (1769–1844), probably the most celebrated Russian fabulist, though in English-speaking countries it is more commonly attributed to Aesop (Krylov 1946b).

38 Nakhman, in Mr. Chirikov’s *The Jews* [Plekhanov’s note]. Evgenii Nikolaevich Chirikov (1864–1932) was a writer and dramatist sympathetic to Populism. It seems that he was expelled from Kazan University as a result of the same demonstrations in 1887 that led to Lenin’s expulsion. The play, *The Jews* (Chirikov 1906), first appeared in 1904 and dealt with the theme of pogroms, portraying Jews in a sympathetic light. Nakhman is the main hero of the play, a Zionist who advocates and practises armed methods of self-defence.

39 Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (1812–70) was a Russian revolutionary journalist and writer who is widely regarded as the founding father of Populism. He spent much of his life in Western Europe, in Paris, Geneva and London, where he associated briefly with the International Working Men’s Association. *My Past and Thoughts* (Herzen 2008) was a multi-volume collection of memoirs.

40 ‘*Perekhvataiushchii dysh*’, ‘*absoliutnaia lichnost*’ and ‘*po-cebe-bytie*’.

'A man who went for a walk in Sokolniki<sup>41</sup> went there to surrender to a pantheistic feeling of unity with the cosmos; and if on the way he came across a soldier under the influence of drink or a peasant woman who engaged him in conversation, the philosopher not only spoke with them but determined the popular substance in its immediate and accidental phenomena. Even a tear welling up under an eyelid was strictly connected to its sequence, to *gemüt*<sup>42</sup> or to "tragedy in the heart" – It was the same with art... the philosophy of music took centre stage...'

Something similar to this passion can now be noted within our Party, which expresses the advanced aspirations of our time. True, the object of the passion is completely different from abstruse philosophy. Our revolutionary Social Democracy is now fascinated by *organisational questions*. But the current passion is just as intense as the former version; just as they used to be engrossed with philosophical articles and pamphlets, now everybody is greedily swallowing up pamphlets and articles commenting on organisation. Just as, back then, friends fell out among themselves over some philosophical concept or other, close comrades now become estranged from one another and are even filled with mutual ill-will, having not managed to come to an understanding regarding the formulation of one or another paragraph of the rules. And our passion, both then and now and for all its historical importance, is not deprived of a certain shade of eccentricity. If then, even the most natural impressions were deprived of anything natural because they were viewed through philosophical spectacles, now the most simple question of revolutionary practice sometimes acquires a comically scholastic character thanks to somebody inevitably trying to fit it into a fashionable organisational scheme. Clearly we are not fated to get by without comical extremities: 'this is how the Russian stove cooks', as Pogodin once said.<sup>43</sup>

But extremes are not all of the same type. That eccentricity to which the young Moscow Hegelians were reduced was only capable of having harmful practical consequences in the most exceptional circumstances. It was good-natured eccentricity for the most part. Consequently the mutual disagreements of the Moscow philosophers were not long-lasting: people fell out *for weeks*, as Herzen testifies. But our disagreements with one another over organisational questions have in the first place lasted incomparably longer; moreover, thanks to the limited character and irrational zeal of some of our

41 A district to the north-east of Moscow town centre, which includes a park.

42 'Soul' or 'feeling' (German).

43 Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin (1800–75) was a Russian historian who advocated the 'Normanist' theory of the Russian state's origin, the view that its founders were Varangians (Vikings) of Swedish origin. He was the son of a serf and politically pan-Slavist.

'practicals', they threaten to do our Party very great, perhaps irreversible, harm. They could, perhaps, bring about a split. This is why they are not always simply funny: at times they are much more disgraceful than comic. The reader should not be surprised if I therefore sometimes speak sharply about them. Nakhman is right: 'Can one really be calm when it is not the tongue but the soul of a man that speaks?' Nekrasov<sup>44</sup> expresses the very same idea with some fine words:

Whoever lives without sorrow and anger  
Does not love his native land ...<sup>45</sup>

To our shame, we have to acknowledge that rather too much harmful eccentricity has occurred among us in recent times. I will probably be obliged to return to this theme sufficiently often. However, at present I only have in view that unforgivable eccentricity with which the 'representatives' of the Ufa, Mid-Urals and Perm committees have, shall we say, immortalised themselves. I have already promised to thoroughly discuss this letter with them and I am now in a hurry to fulfil the obligation.

These interesting 'representatives' cannot in any way allow that one and the same person could, without contradicting himself, write the article, 'A Red Congress in a Red Country'<sup>46</sup> and the article, 'What is Not to Be Done'. It seems to them completely impossible and, recognising that the second of these articles belongs to me, they ascribe the first to Lenin. They say with great pathos: 'The ink with which Lenin wrote and taught us about what great harm would be done to the Party by its internal enemies – revisionists, opportunists and Economists – had not yet dried before *Iskra* had gone and written about tact, softness, love of peace and leniency in relation to these internal enemies'.

In No. 63 of *Iskra*, I drew the attention of the 'representatives' to the fact that the article, 'Red Congress', was written not in Lenin's, but in my own 'ink'.<sup>47</sup> Now I will try to explain to them the logicity of that which seemed to them illogical in the extreme.

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44 Nikolai Alexeevich Nekrasov (1821–77) was a Russian poet who published the literary journal, *Sovremennik* ('The Contemporary'), from 1846–66, which gave a platform to Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Turgenev and Chernyshevskii. It was eventually closed down by the government. His work expressed sympathy with the injustices suffered by, among others, peasants and women.

45 From the poem, 'The Newspaper Room' (Nekrasov 2007).

46 See footnote 13 of this chapter.

47 This came in the brief editorial reply to the letter, also included in the supplement, which the author (Plekhanov) promised to expand upon at a later date. The promise was fulfilled in the form of the present article.



The leading article 'A Red Congress in a Red Country' points out 'the harm being caused to the Social-Democratic Party of Germany not only by revisionism but also by revisionists; the resolution of the Second Berlin District, which insisted on the expulsion of Bernstein, Göhre<sup>48</sup> and Braun<sup>49</sup> from the Party is welcomed, and the fact that the revisionist Bernstein – who remains in the ranks of the Party – will still cause it a lot of trouble is pointed out... The article also views Kautsky's 'rubbery resolution',<sup>50</sup> which was adopted by the International Socialist Congress in Paris and which took an altogether too courteous attitude to the revisionists and to revisionism, with regret'.

All this is so: here, my opinions have been represented correctly, though they are spoken about using such strange words, as if an indictment of us at a political trial is being written. But the fact is that I still very firmly support these opinions and no less firmly supported them when I wrote the article 'What is Not to Be Done'. And if the 'representatives' bitterly exclaim: 'the revisionists can congratulate themselves on a brilliant victory: they finally outflanked and then tamed a most irreconcilable and energetic opponent (one of theirs? GP)', then this is only 'bewilderment', as Gleb Uspenskii's merchant put it when he was beaten by the gendarmes.<sup>51</sup> In the article, 'What is Not to be Done?', I recommended 'tact, softness, love of peace and leniency' *not in the least in connection with gentlemen of the Bernstein and Göhre fraternity* and not in relation to those intriguers who the Kautsky resolution undoubtedly had in mind (it was from me that it received the epithet 'rubbery') and who, under the pretext of a 'revision of Marxism', pushed the French proletariat into the embrace of bourgeois democracy. These gentlemen and these intriguers are our enemies because they are the enemies of revolutionary socialism, and whoever would take a lenient attitude towards them, whoever wants to make peace with them, would show through this that they were making peace with *treachery to our*

48 Paul Göhre (1864–1928) was a Protestant pastor and theologian who joined the German Social Democrats. He worked in a factory in order to write a book about his experiences there: *Three Months in a Workshop: a Practical Study* (Göhre 1895).

49 The 'Braun' in question could be Lily Braun (1865–1916), who was on the right of the Party and who was married to Heinrich Braun (1854–1927), who also held revisionist views.

50 See footnote 18 of this chapter.

51 Gleb Ivanovich Uspenskii (1843–1902) was a contributor to several leading literary journals and was sympathetic to Populism. He was a realist writer whose stories and journalistic sketches dealt with the lives of the peasants and the urban poor. The 'merchant' in question appears to be based on a real individual, Fedor Mikhailovich Reshetnikov (1841–71), another radical writer, who allowed the police to mistake him for a workman in order to expose their brutality (Uspenskii 1957b).

*entire cause*. But I am now speaking about people who are entirely dissimilar to this type of person. I spoke first of all about those Russian Social Democrats who were *once* carried away by revisionism, not having noticed its anti-proletarian essence, and who subsequently turned their backs on it the moment they understood this, its essence, recognising all the basic positions of orthodox Marxism that were being criticised by the revisionists, and who now retain certain bad (I would say *metaphysical*) habits of thought only as a result of a certain mental inertia. Secondly, I spoke about those of our comrades from the so-called Minority who not only were never carried away by revisionism but who, on the contrary, always belonged among the most energetic and capable of its opponents. I said that the interests of our movement, *those of orthodox Marxism*, demanded that we should not reject either *former* 'Economists' or our *current* minority. And I will not cease saying this so long as the voices of the irrationally zealous guardians of orthodoxy are heard accusing these people of heresy and screaming: 'Crucify them! Crucify them!'

Indeed, look at the Minority. On *programmatic* questions they take the same theoretical position as us. Much more important still, their leaders – comrades Starover, Axelrod, Zasulich and Martov – played a most active and useful part in the *working out and the defence of our programme*. They were even the main advocates of our Party's opinions (orthodox, I hope?) on the basic questions of tactics, as the greater part of those resolutions which our Second Congress adopted without the least debate were proposed by them. True, the agenda only reached tactical questions on the last day of the Congress, when there was no longer time to argue about them. But even if we had not been obliged to hurry, we would have all the same adopted the draft resolutions drawn up by the Minority without delay, after perhaps having made some entirely inessential changes to them of a predominantly stylistic nature, so well did these drafts express the tactical views developed and defended in *Zaria* and *Iskra*. Some have noted that the draft of the resolution proposed by me on the question of the liberals is dissimilar to the draft proposed by comrade Starover. But, firstly, just about the entire majority of Congress voted for Starover's resolution and, consequently, if it contained something heretical, then many 'hard' *Iskra*-ites are guilty of heresy; secondly, you will not uncover a trace of any such heresy in it using any reagent whatsoever. I myself made several private remarks at the Congress in regard to it. But I did not even dream that these private remarks could be construed as an accusation of favouring revisionism against comrade Starover. In such an interpretation there is again too much of that *irrational zeal* with which we are already familiar.

Speaking of the Minority, I consider it useful to explain here how the criticism I made of them regarding the first paragraph of our rules should be under-

stood. At the Congress I said that this paragraph, in the form in which it was presented by comrade Martov and in which it was adopted, opened the door to the invasion of our Party by various opportunist elements. In order to remove this danger, I said that we had to adopt the formula comrade Lenin defended. I continue to think the Lenin formula more successful. But this is a detail on the basis of which it was ultra-absurd to divide our comrades into sheep and goats, into irreconcilables and moderates. And most surprising of all is the fact that many of those whom it is now possible to call not only *hard* but simply *rock hard*, and who are ready to drive the all too 'soft' – in their opinion – Minority from the face of the earth, *themselves voted for Martov's formula*.<sup>52</sup> One is to hope that they do not suspect themselves of 'softness' or of opportunism on this basis.

'The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another'.<sup>53</sup> A partial question about one or another paragraph of the rules is one thing and a general question which the revisionists and the orthodox fight about in all the civilised countries of the world is another. From the fact that I would regard the exclusion of Mr. Bernstein from the membership list of Social Democracy with great approval, on the grounds that he rejects all the basic principles of revolutionary socialism, it does not in the least follow that I should be at enmity with comrade Martov because he put forward his own formula for the first paragraph. Mr. Bernstein is an incorrigible revisionist and we are obliged to fight

52 The dispute over paragraph one of the Party constitution was put to a roll-call vote, and so we know the identity of the 21 individuals (some with two mandates) who voted for Martov's formula (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 331). Which of these Plekhanov is referring to here is completely unclear, and there appears to be a likelihood that, for some reason or other, he is not telling the truth – no evidence exists of any significant 'changing of sides' among delegates who initially voted for Martov's formula in this debate, in the sense that they later became followers of Lenin. The only individuals Plekhanov is prepared to name are the 'representatives' of the Ufa, Perm and Mid-Urals committees. Of these, only Ufa was actually represented at the Second Congress of the RSDLP (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 513) and its two delegates 'Muravev' (Gerasim Mikhailovich Mishenev, 1876–1906) and 'Fomin' (Viktor Krokhmal) found themselves on opposing sides during the debate on paragraph one. Krokhmal was one of the leading allies of Martov at the Congress and he remained active in the intra-Party struggle on the side of the Minority until eventually being co-opted to the Central Committee in October 1904 as one of their representatives. There are no other names in this list of Martov's supporters, who subsequently distinguished themselves as allies of Lenin, judging by the content of the latter's correspondence from this and subsequent periods.

53 Corinthians I ch. 15 v. 41. According to this passage, the dead, when resurrected, whilst sharing a common, incorruptible state, will differ from one another just as the moon, sun and stars differ from one another in their splendour.

to the finish with him in the interests of the proletariat; comrade Martov is an irreconcilable enemy of revisionism, an orthodox of the purest type, and we are obliged to go arm-in-arm and shoulder-to-shoulder with him in the interests of that very same class. It is necessary to be *as unyielding as possible* in our attitude to Mr. Bernstein and it is necessary to be *as accommodating as possible* in our attitude to comrade Martov. Is this all not really simple? Is this not all really clear? Is this not really all self-explanatory?

All this is simple and clear and self-explanatory only – alas – not for everyone. We need to know how to be accommodating in *particulars* thanks to the interests of the *general* and the *whole*. But only those whose heads are not just filled with particulars and who are capable of rising to an understanding of the general interests of the movement are capable of yielding in relation to these particulars. And those whose field of vision is no greater than an inch in diameter and for whom detail is everything – they will go to any lengths for the sake of detail with a light heart. In Shchedrin there somewhere figures a certain counsellor, Ivanov, who is of such a reduced physical stature that he is decidedly ‘incapable of dealing with anything extensive’.<sup>54</sup> Regrettably we have such Ivanovs among us. And our Party sometimes does rather badly out of this dwarfish breed of people. Not because they are distinguished by sluggishness and conservatism. On the contrary, they are very mobile and changeable ‘like a breeze in a field’. Today they go with the ‘*Economists*’ and tomorrow they migrate *en masse* to the *politicals*; today they do not want to hear those who speak to them about the necessity of organisation and tomorrow they do not want to hear about anything but organisation; today they resolve organisational questions according to the principles of *democratism* and tomorrow they become desperate *centralists*. But whoever they go with, whatever is defended by them and whatever fascinates them – they never take a step forward in their mental development and their heads will always remain decisively inaccessible to anything ‘extensive’. They want to lead the working class

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54 This character appears in *The History of a Town* (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1870), a story which was originally serialised in *Otechestvennie Zapiski* (‘Fatherland Notes’) during 1869–70 and was later published as a separate volume. He was one of the many governors of Glupov (‘Sillytown’) and its adjacent area, and is mainly remembered because of an ongoing disagreement among townsfolk about whether or not he was dead or alive. According to one side, he died from fright on receiving an altogether too extensive decree from the senate which he had no hope of understanding, but according to another he never died, but was sent into retirement because his brain had shrunk to embryonic proportions owing to lack of use. In retirement it was said that he lived on his own means and fathered a new species of small-headed people, Ivanov thus being viewed by the townsfolk as the cause of the developmental disorder microcephaly, in which the head is unusually small.

but are themselves incapable of passing from one of their comical extremes to another without a guide. A tortured consciousness of their incapability never leaves them and, as non-entities who aspire to adhere to some unit as quickly as possible they, like Krylov's frogs who asked for a king,<sup>55</sup> diligently search out a 'leader' for themselves and, when they manage to acquire one – from time to time some *one-eyed* person sufficiently honourable to lead the *blind from birth* can always be found – they imagine that the Messiah has arrived and – in one key or another and on some pretext or another and using some title or another – they demand *dictatorship* for it. I have already had the honour of seeing more than one such Messiah and fear that in the future I am destined to experience this unlikely pleasure on more than one occasion.

It costs our counsellor Ivanovs nothing to tear our Party apart for the simple reason that the concept of Party unity also represents an 'extensive' concept and their heads, as we know, cannot in the least accommodate anything extensive.

If the fate of Russian Social Democracy hangs on these eternally ignorant people, then it will never mature into a serious social force. But, fortunately, there are many other *conscious* elements in it; otherwise it would not express the most advanced ambitions of our time. These conscious elements will not give the victory to the counsellor Ivanovs – they will defend the unity and honour of our Party.

But to return to the 'representatives'. Besides my attitude to the Minority, my attitude to our former 'Economists' confuses them.

When the 'Economists' predominated in our Party and when – as is natural – all the counsellor Ivanovs were on their side, I warred cruelly with them. They did not doubt at that time that they would be victorious. It did not end that way: they were conquered and now we sometimes have to defend them from those same counsellor Ivanovs who, having previously stood in their ranks, accused me of heresy for my negative relation to 'Economism', shouting at the top of their voices that I was a Blanquist and a 'People's Will'-ite. Now the counsellor Ivanovs have changed front and want, come what may, to 'liquidate' their former teachers and allies, accusing even me of 'Economism'. I do not consider it necessary to defend myself here, only to say of our former 'Economists' that, once they saw their mistake and eliminated it, *once they turned away from that revisionism with which they sympathised at one time owing to a misunderstanding* – from that point on we would have been *slanderers* if we had continued to call them revisionists. They became our co-thinkers once they recognised our programme, and whoever could have

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55 See footnote 37 of this chapter.

thought to slight them as members of the Party lacking full rights would have committed a serious injustice and would have acted in a terribly improvident manner.<sup>56</sup> We revolutionary Social Democrats have so many real, irreconcilable and incorrigible enemies that on our part, it would be madness to artificially create more of them, pushing away from us those who, along with us, adopt the point of view of the revolutionary proletariat. Antagonising them, we weaken our own forces and, at the same time, increase the relative forces of our enemies – *those who fear us and fight with us not as a result of a misunderstanding but because they obey an unerring class instinct*. Antagonising former ‘Economists’, we therefore act *to the detriment* of that revolutionary Social Democracy which we wish to defend, and *to the benefit* of the opportunism we want to fight: we go to one room but end up in another. What blunder could be funnier than this? What position could be more pitiful?

We would not want the counsellor Ivanovs, who are now thundering against former ‘Economists’, to have any cause whatsoever for a false interpretation of my words. Therefore I will now clarify my observations.

I maintain that those of our dim-witted enthusiasts for ‘hardness’, who with a light heart are ready to separate one category of comrade after another from our Party just as one tears leaf after leaf off an artichoke, are working for the benefit of opportunism – more than that, they are working for the benefit of the conservative bourgeoisie and the police department. But I would also like

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56 It seems necessary to point out the unexpected character of the argument Plekhanov has made here, when viewed in the context of the Second Congress of the RSDLP. At the Congress, despite various attempts at amendment, some of which met with success, the programme drafted by the editors of *Iskra* and *Zaria* was adopted with just one of three ‘Economist’ delegates – Akimov – voting against it. All the other delegates, including those aligned with the Bund, *Rabochee Delo* and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* voted in favour of it, no doubt despite certain reservations, just as all but two delegates voted for *Iskra* to become the central newspaper of the RSDLP. In this sense, approval of the programme cannot be seen as representing much in terms of practical political unity and Plekhanov must surely have known this. Despite the Bund delegates supporting the programme, they walked out of the Congress over an organisational question, as did the ‘Economists’ Martynov and Akimov. Likewise, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* differed from *Iskra* over the necessity of a second Party newspaper and *Iskra* itself split over the personal composition of the central bodies, a disagreement which itself reflected differing attitudes to the non-*Iskra* elements in the RSDLP. As such, support for the Party programme serves as a very poor indicator of the degree of unity actually prevailing in the RSDLP at this time. As for the question of ‘Party members lacking full rights’, it seems that Plekhanov is consciously pitching his argument to precisely those organisations whose representatives had walked away from the Second Congress – the Bund and the Union Abroad – and had thus placed their continued involvement in the RSDLP in doubt.

to note: *I absolutely do not say that they do this consciously*. They simply cannot manage what they have created. When our struggle with 'Economism' was taking place, they learned the words 'opportunism', 'revisionism', and 'Bernsteinianism' by heart; now they bandy these words about at completely the wrong time, not considering the context in which they use them or the people they use them to, not understanding that circumstances have changed, even accusing all those who point to this change in circumstances of opportunism. Imagine that you have a parrot hanging in a cage in the presence of which you, seeing that it is raining, exclaim: 'terrible weather!' The bad weather continues for one, two, three days, it lasts so long that the parrot at last remembers your exclamation and, every morning together with you, repeats: 'terrible weather!' But then the bad weather ends, the skies clear, the sun starts to shine and you say: 'at last, it is fine!' but your feathered housemate repeats, as previously: 'terrible weather!' and reproachfully looks at you with its round eyes as if to accuse you of opportunism. What is to be done with him? With time, of course, he will learn how to say: 'at last, it is fine!' But, perhaps he will learn how to do this only when the bad weather returns and until that time he will not cease to pester you with the inappropriate interjection: 'terrible weather!' and the absurd suspicion towards you of opportunism. Just try to outwit a parrot!

A Latin proverb states that 'what is right for Jupiter is not right for the Ox',<sup>57</sup> and I say 'what is right for a parrot is not right for an *Iskra*-ite', even if owing to his 'hardness' he belongs among the counsellor Ivanovs. Our Second Congress was a complete triumph for orthodox Marxism: at it, it was really only Akimov who spoke against it. But Akimov terrifies nobody: these days you do not even scare sparrows in the garden with him. We should take advantage of our victory, but it is proposed that we pursue a policy thanks to which disagreements and discord appear and multiply in our own ranks – the ranks of the orthodox – and our intention of 'building the Party' threatens to end in the same pitiful failure with which a certain project to build a tower up to heaven ended.<sup>58</sup> This is not the triumph of the victors, it is confusion which usually only reigns in the ranks of the defeated. And the instigators of this absurd confusion think of themselves as *organisers*! No, if they have the least bit of talent, then this talent is of a *purely negative, disorganising* character.

The 'representatives' of Ufa, Mid-Urals and Perm portray the matter as if the 'Economists', not having yet rejected sympathy with revisionism and

57 *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*. The Roman cult of Jupiter – the king of the Gods – required the sacrifice of a white ox.

58 See Chapter 18, footnote 56.



wishing every kind of harm to revolutionary Social Democracy, exerted influence on the literary representatives of the Minority: Axelrod, Martov, Vera Zasulich – whilst these in their turn ruined me, plunging me into the abyss of the opportunism I once hated. And what is most interesting of all – this hellishly-crafty intrigue was realised even before I carried out the infamous co-option, given that the article, ‘What is Not to be Done’, *appeared at the time when I was still the sole editor of Iskra*. With the help of this explanation, it is not difficult to present the act of co-option itself in a suitable light: this too was a product of the intrigue so vividly portrayed by the ‘representatives’. Such an explanation is very deft and very convenient, only it is a shame that it is reminiscent of the celebrated accounts of the ubiquitous ‘Polish Intrigue’ by *Moskovskie Vedomosti*.<sup>59</sup> Whoever can manage a sceptical attitude to the Polish intrigue will of course relate with mistrust to chatter about the ‘Economist’ intrigue that has allegedly ruined me: such people will simply laugh at this ‘frenzied’ chatter.

In the short article printed in No. 63 of *Iskra*, I drew the attention of the ‘representatives’ to the fact that their discussions of different revolutionary movements in Western Europe displayed a most dismal unfamiliarity with the history of these movements.<sup>60</sup> I shall not touch on this weak side of their view of the world – if it is possible to use such a term here – but will speak about their *organisational opinions*. Right now, this is what is important.

Both committees and individual members of the Party can be invested with very broad powers but this should depend on the Central Committee. Conversely, the Central Committee can – if it needs to and if it finds this useful – use its authority to dissolve a committee or another organisation and it can deprive one or another member of the Party of his rights. Otherwise it is impossible to successfully organise proletarian struggle.

With these words, the ‘representatives’ express the complete essence of their organisational views. And not only their own. I am certain that almost all the

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59 *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (‘Moscow News’) was an influential newspaper. First printed in 1756, it appeared daily from 1859. It was published by the university’s press. Under the editorship of Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov (1818–87) from 1863 until his death, it attained a peak circulation of around twelve thousand and reflected increasingly conservative views, effectively serving as a government mouthpiece. The paper was taken over by the far-right and anti-Semitic Black Hundreds Party in 1909 and was closed down immediately after the October Revolution.

60 These comments were republished in Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 13, pp. 57–8.

supporters of the Majority agree with them, and the Central Committee itself has more than once expressed certainty that it possesses the unlimited right to 'dissolve' persons in the interests of 'proletarian struggle'.

The Minority in our Party refuse to grant it precisely this right. Do the claims of the Central Committee have a basis? We will now see.

Imagine that we all granted the Central Committee the still controversial right of 'dissolution'. This is what would happen. In view of an approaching Congress, the Central Committee would everywhere 'dissolve' all the elements that were dissatisfied with it and would install its minions everywhere and, having filled up all the committees with these minions, it would without difficulty secure an entirely obedient majority for itself at the Congress. Congress, made up of the minions of the Central Committee, cries 'Hurrah!' to the latter in concert, approves all its successful and unsuccessful activity and applauds all its plans and initiatives. Then we will really have neither a majority nor a minority in the Party because then the ideal Persian Shah will have been brought to life. Shchedrin says that when Madame MacMahon<sup>61</sup> asked this chief of the Muslim 'hards', who exercised the right of 'dissolution' by tradition, which of the European countries he liked more than the rest, he answered 'Russia' without hesitating. He immediately and briefly explained his thinking: *'jamais politique, toujours hurrah! et puis fuit!'*<sup>62</sup> We will have this one more time: *jamais politique, toujours hurrah! et puis . . . dissolution'.*

The 'representatives' call this centralism. Enough, counsellors! It would simply have been a hangman's noose drawn tight around the neck of our Party; this is *Bonapartism* if it is not absolute monarchy in the old, pre-revolutionary 'style'. You imagine that this *so-called centralism* is necessary for the cause of proletarian struggle but I say to you that it has absolutely nothing in common with proletarian struggle and that the very emergence of the idea of it in the heads of Russian Social Democrats shows that our Party, unfortunately, has still not passed beyond its childhood. The deceased Sergei Nechaev<sup>63</sup> would

61 The wife of French marshal, and later president, Patrice de MacMahon (1808–93).

62 'No calculation, lots of "hurrah" and then they are no more'. This incident takes place in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Pompadours*, a cycle of satirical sketches originally published in the journal *Otechestvennaia Zapiski* between 1863–74 (Saltykov-Shchedrin 1886).

63 Sergei Gennadievich Nechaev (1847–82) was a Russian revolutionary active among students in the late 1860s who acquired a reputation for psychopathic behaviour and manipulative organisational techniques. In 1869 he organised the murder of a student who had refused to carry out his orders, a crime for which he was convicted in 1873. He died in prison. In recent decades it has not been unknown for historians to associate the name of Nechaev with that of Lenin for polemical purposes, though the crude literary productions of the former, such as *The Catechism of a Revolutionary* (1869) do not reflect

probably have liked such centralism, but it cannot under any circumstances meet with approval on the part of orthodox Marxists who are still in possession of their mental faculties.

The 'representatives' continue:

The preparation of the proletariat for dictatorship is an important organisational task that requires everything else to be subordinated to it. Among other things, this preparation consists in *the creation of a mood in favour of a strong, powerful proletarian organisation* and in the explanation of the general significance of such an organisation. One could object that *dictators* have appeared and will appear of their own accord. But this has not always been the case and one should not be spontaneous, one should not be opportunistic in a proletarian Party. A high degree of consciousness should be associated with absolute obedience – one should encourage the other. (As an aside, they add: 'consciousness of necessity is freedom of will'.)

The philosophical aside regarding *freedom of will* is the purest nonsense which shows just one thing: that the counsellor Ivanovs should not be let loose on philosophy. As regards the *dictatorship*, I would say to the 'representatives' that they clearly *mix up the dictatorship of the proletariat with a dictatorship over the proletariat*. But no, even this is inaccurate. In their Bonapartist plan for a 'centralistic' organisation, there is no place in general for the cause of the proletariat: it is a reduced version of the intelligentsia conspiracies of the *pre-proletarian period*; it represents only a new edition of the Nechaev dictatorship.<sup>64</sup>

'Of course', continue the representatives, 'we imagine the Central Committee to be a collective of the most experienced, the most energetic and the most battle-hardened fighters, the wisest and most experienced adherents of the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Consequently they can be allowed to go into

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Marxist ideas any more than the highly legalistic organisational methods of Lenin resembled the methods of Nechaev. Plekhanov's article may well be the earliest example of this dubious comparison.

64 Not without reason is the concept 'revolutionary Social Democracy' covered by the concept 'intelligentsia' in the minds of the 'representatives'. This is not in the least a mere slip of the pen as their apologists – who are ashamed of them – now say. And they are ready to present their amazing 'dictatorship' to the Western proletariat as an important discovery. What utter comedians! Indeed, they really have made their mark! [Plekhanov's footnote].

every detail of our activity and they can and should be allowed to take on the broadest possible powers'.

A collective of the wisest and most experienced fighters! Really, counselors, who are you trying to fool? What wise and experienced person would want to enter a collective which, in your plan, represents nothing less than a criminal attempt on the life of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party?! *Only limited people and status-seekers would want to enter such a collective.* I say 'status-seeker' because only such types would resolve to make a pedestal for their personal vanity out of the interests of the Party, and 'limited' because they would not understand how low, fragile and pitiful the pedestal was. No, if our Party really graced itself with such an organisation, then there would soon no longer be room in its ranks either for wise people or for tempered fighters: only the frogs who had finally received their wished-for king would remain in it, with the *Central Crane* swallowing them one after the other, without let or hindrance. *Jamais politique, toujours hourrah! et puis...* farewell poor, unwise frogs!

The 'representatives' are convinced that the 'Economists' ruined me and that in consequence of this I became too accommodating. I am so often accused of being unyielding that it is very pleasant for me to acquire the reputation of a compliant man. But, at the risk of losing this only just acquired reputation, I will say to the 'representatives' that I will be unyielding to the end in one matter.<sup>65</sup> *I am a centralist but not a Bonapartist.* I stand for the creation of a strong, centralist organisation but I do not want the centre of our Party to eat up the Party as a whole just as the Pharaoh's lean cows ate up the fat ones.<sup>66</sup> And it is my deep conviction that none of the level-headed Social Democrats have any right to be yielding in this question, because it question touches on the very essence of our Party, as a Party of the conscious, growing and developing proletariat.

Only those who exhibit and defend pretences similar to those just considered can and should yield at this point. On the part of *such* people it is time, it has long since been time, to incline towards concessions because they have

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65 I very much regret the fact that at the Congress of the League I supported several demands of the Central Committee which had a close connection with the organisational principles now being defended by the 'representatives'. At that time, the true character of these demands was still not clear to me. I still did not know how far our 'eccentric' Central Committee could go, and considered myself morally obliged to defend its prestige [Plekhanov's footnote].

66 Pharaoh saw this remarkable event in a dream. It was interpreted by Joseph to imply that seven good years would be followed by seven years of famine (Genesis ch. 41, v. 4).

already done far too much harm to our movement, to the whole cause of the liberation movement in Russia!

Parting now from the 'representatives', I would very much like to believe that they will not refuse to ponder over what I have said. True, it is not at all difficult to understand. One must only make a little effort, as Dickens's Miss Dombey would say.<sup>67</sup>

And let the various 'representatives' well remember that *the problem I indicated is the central point of all our organisational arguments. If only it finds a proper solution, all the remaining points of controversy will be settled almost of their own accord.* The Central Committee does not want to co-opt comrades from the Minority because it is afraid of their opposition to its currently monstrous pretences, which are worthy only of laughter. It very well knows that the Minority for this reason wants to introduce its representatives into its midst in an attempt to restrain it and bring it to reason before it is too late. Therefore it issues appeals against the Minority to *Monsieur Le Plebiscite*, a person to whom an emperor who did not end very well once loved to turn!<sup>68</sup>

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67 This is the catchphrase of Louisa Chick, Dombey's married sister, rather than his neglected daughter Florence, in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (Dickens 2012).

68 This refers to Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808–73), who was the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was elected president of France during the 1848 revolution and carried out a *coup d'état* in December 1851. This new government was approved by a plebiscite and Bonaparte ruled as emperor until September 1870, when he was captured in battle during the Franco-Prussian War and republican forces seized power.

## Georgii Plekhanov, 'The Working Class and the Social-Democratic Intelligentsia', *Iskra* No. 70 & No. 71

*Plekhanov's polemical article, 'The Working Class and the Social-Democratic Intelligentsia', was published in two instalments in Iskra<sup>1</sup> and deals exclusively with Lenin's conception of Social-Democratic consciousness as expressed in two short passages in What Is To Be Done?<sup>2</sup> In these well-known passages, Lenin argues that Social-Democratic consciousness is introduced into the workers' movement 'from without', having been formulated by bourgeois intellectuals who alone have the leisure time and the access to learning necessary for the formulation of Social-Democratic doctrine. This doctrine is introduced to the workers' movement through the agency of a relatively small body of intellectually advanced workers who go on to spread the doctrine in the workers' movement as a whole. Without the influence of this intelligentsia-derived Social-Democratic trend, the workers' movement remains at the level of 'trade-union' consciousness, an outlook which incorporates both political and economic struggle on the part of workers, but which is essentially reformist and lacks the perspective of putting an end to the capitalist system and of replacing it with socialism.*

*Despite the fact that it involves a lengthy citation from the leading German Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky (1854–1938), Plekhanov argues that Lenin's conception of Social-Democratic consciousness, as it is described in What Is To Be Done?, represents a break with conventional Marxist thinking. Plekhanov contends that Social-Democratic thought cannot be developed 'completely independently' of the working-class movement, citing his own migration from a Populist to the Social-Democratic point of view, which he claims took place under the influence of strikes in St. Petersburg, in support of this claim. In the article, he also claims that Marx and Engels believed workers to be capable of going beyond 'trade-union' consciousness as a result of their social and economic situation, and that in Marx and Engels's conception, the role of Social-Democratic intellectuals was merely to speed up an inevitable radicalisation of workers' consciousness rather than to introduce Social-Democratic ideas. Plekhanov thus characterises the actual relationship obtaining between the 'spontaneous' workers' movement and the conscious bearers of Social-Democratic ideas as a 'dialectical',*

<sup>1</sup> *Iskra* No. 70, pp. 2–5 and No. 71, pp. 2–4 (25 July, 1 August 1904).

<sup>2</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, pp. 375–6 and pp. 383–5.

*mutually-influencing interaction, rather than a one-directional process in which the Social-Democratic intelligentsia shape the thinking of an intellectually passive Social-Democratic working class, a view which is presented as philosophically idealist and which is attributed to Lenin.*

*A full investigation of Plekhanov's argument on its theoretical merits perhaps goes beyond the scope of the present study, and is in any case probably unnecessary, as there are several discussions of Lenin's theory of Social-Democratic consciousness already in circulation.<sup>3</sup> This said, there are one or two important factual issues concerning Plekhanov's criticism of Lenin as it is expressed in the present article which are worthy of attention. The first of these is the way Plekhanov presents his own intellectual development, starting with his migration from Populism to Social Democracy. In the article, Plekhanov claims this took place under the influence of strikes taking place in St Petersburg during 1878–9, whilst he was still active in 'Land and Freedom', but this account is in fact highly selective. It is true that Plekhanov did contribute a number of articles to the newspaper Zemlia i Volia concerning these strikes in 1878–9, but in the Iskra article he glosses over the fact that his subsequent departure from 'Land and Freedom' to form 'Black Redistribution' did not actually involve a turn towards the urban working class so much as a turn towards the peasantry, whose supposed hunger for land was viewed as having revolutionary potential.<sup>4</sup> This fact complicates his claim that the strikes in question influenced him in the direction of Marxism, as does the fact that, for a whole period after the foundation of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, Plekhanov appears to have taken a fairly indifferent attitude towards labour disputes.*

*Plekhanov also fails to mention that, prior to his 'conversion' to Social Democracy and Marxism, he had left Russia for Europe, where he did not become involved in the local Social-Democratic movement but instead began a programme of independent study, on the basis of which he finally acquired a Social-Democratic world outlook.<sup>5</sup> These circumstances only give credibility to Lenin's contention that Social-Democratic ideas were formulated by bourgeois intellectuals who are not closely connected to the labour movement. In a similar vein, Plekhanov fails to properly acknowledge that, having formulated his views, he and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group remained abroad, whilst seeking to acquire a group of mainly intelligentsia adepts in Russia, who in turn sought to*

3 Mayer 1994, Shandro 1995, Mayer 1996, Harman 2010, Le Blanc 2010, Lih 2010, Mayer 2010, Suny 2010.

4 See Baron 1954 and Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 1, pp. 108–36.

5 Baron 1954, pp. 45–7.



*bring these ideas to the working class.<sup>6</sup> This process once again seems to speak quite powerfully in favour of Lenin's conception of Social-Democratic consciousness being introduced to the workers' movement 'from without'.*

*A second important issue is the relationship of the article to a speech given by the former Rabochee Delo editor, Aleksandr Martynov, at the Second Congress of the RSDLP. The contents of this speech and Plekhanov's article are remarkably similar, even if Martynov provides some rather more convincing examples of workers going beyond 'trade-union consciousness' without the help of intellectuals.<sup>7</sup> However, the issue here is not only the lack of originality in Plekhanov's arguments; his rejection of these same arguments at the Second RSDLP Congress when replying to Martynov sharply poses the question of his consistency. At the Second Congress, Plekhanov, with every justification, pointed out that his opponent's speech – by far the longest at the Congress – was only directed at 'one phrase in one of the pamphlets of one of the authors of the draft programme', implying that its impact was negligible.<sup>8</sup> Martov echoed this dismissive attitude with the offer to concede Martynov's point by adding the word 'consciousness' to one of the paragraphs of the programme, noting that the presence or absence of this word was not a matter of importance.<sup>9</sup>*

*If it is easy to sympathise with this pragmatic outlook, then it is hard to understand why Plekhanov should then devote such a lengthy article to the subject, if it were not merely to annoy Lenin or to express a reconciliation with Martynov in his typically indirect fashion. Such a reconciliation seems remarkable given the intense opposition Plekhanov previously demonstrated towards Rabochee Delo,*

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6 See Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 58: '(T)he socialist intelligentsia has the obligation to organise the workers and *prepare* them as far as possible for the struggle against the present-day system of government as well as against the future bourgeois parties. The intelligentsia must *immediately set to work to organise* the workers in our industrial centres, as the foremost representatives of the whole working population of Russia, in secret groups with links between them and a definite social and political programme corresponding to the present-day needs of the entire class of producers in Russia and the basic tasks of socialism. . . . The *Emancipation of Labour* group is convinced that not only the success but even the mere possibility of such a purposeful movement of the Russian working class depends to a large degree upon the work referred to above being done by the intelligentsia among the working class'. See also Harding and Taylor 1983, p. 68 and pp. 113–19, where Plekhanov and Axelrod speak of a 'worker-intelligentsia' – a small stratum of educated proletarians – which appears to serve as a bridge between the intelligentsia founders of Russian Marxism and its intended working-class audience.

7 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 139–52.

8 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 158 and p. 171.

9 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 152

*an opposition which produced a split in the Union Abroad and which appears to have played no small role in the failure of the October 1901 'Unification' Conference.<sup>10</sup> This said, if we bear in mind his arguments in 'What is Not to be Done' concerning a new attitude to 'former' opponents, the apparent reconciliation with Martynov expressed in the article is perhaps not entirely surprising.*

*Despite its questionable aspects, and the fact that it was directed against him personally, Lenin does not appear to have responded to this article, which was published at a time when his supporters were preparing to organise their own unofficial factional apparatus, the aim of which was to campaign for a Third Party Congress.<sup>11</sup> Apart from the effect of these pressing practical concerns, Lenin's failure to respond may also have been influenced by the fact that the article appears to be incomplete, a further instalment being promised but not, apparently, delivered. Another motive may have been an indifference towards the subject matter which, in the manner of Martov's and Plekhanov's speeches at the Second Congress, he does not appear to have viewed as being of great practical importance. Perhaps because of this failure to reply, some observers may have concluded that Plekhanov's criticism is essentially correct, that Lenin was no match for Plekhanov in philosophy and that he did indeed 'bend the stick too far' in this account of Social-Democratic consciousness in What Is To Be Done? However, on the basis of what has been said above, it seems that conclusions more sympathetic to Lenin could also be drawn.*

## The Working Class and the Social-Democratic Intelligentsia

*Better late than never*

The question of the relation of the Social-Democratic intelligentsia to the working class in the form which interests us here represents just one aspect of the fundamental question of the 'philosophy of history': that of the relationship between social *being* and social *thought*. It is possible to say that, over

10 See the commentaries to Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 for more details.

11 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 443–51.

the course of the whole nineteenth century, this problem has not ceased to be a priority in social science, though it lay on the basis of various *teleological arguments*: thus for example the argument, famous in its time, between Strauss and Bruno Bauer concerning the origin of evangelical fabrications was in essence an argument about how 'thought' (the '*Selbstbewusstsein*' of Bruno Bauer) related to 'being' (the '*Substanz*' of Strauss).<sup>12</sup> In the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, it came to the forefront every time our revolutionaries started to think about the relationship between the *intelligentsia* and the *people*. A Miliukov of the future<sup>13</sup> – one more profound and more broadly educated – will discover a mass of the most interesting information for 'a history of Russian culture' in our endless and disorderly all-Russian arguments about this question. From the bottom of my heart I wish success to this future Miliukov, but I myself at present have neither the least wish, nor the possibility, to go into 'the depths of time'. I am about to review the question only in so far as it touches on the most urgent practical interests of our Party.

Our 'Economists' said still recently that 'the revolutionary bacillus – the intelligentsia' should not propose a socialist programme to the proletariat before the proletariat, without any help from the side of the intelligentsia, had reasoned its way to socialist ideals. This was a big *practical mistake* that was conditioned by a coarse *theoretical* blunder: a misunderstanding of the role

12 The 'self-awareness' of Bauer and the 'substance' of Strauss (German).

Bruno Bauer (1809–82) and David Strauss (1808–74) were theologians and philosophers to a greater or lesser degree influenced by Hegel. Both believed that the gospels were falsified accounts of the foundation of Christianity, Bauer arguing that Christian doctrine was developed in its entirety by the early church fathers using older religious ideas, whilst Strauss claimed that the gospels contained a significant element of myth blended with historical fact. Bauer was viewed by Engels as an idealist, but as a superior scholar to Strauss. He claimed that Bauer had laid the basis for a more scientific enquiry into the origins of Christianity by identifying some of its ideological, cultural and social roots (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 24, pp. 427–35). The debate between the two philosophers can be considered 'teleological' in the sense that both sides viewed history as a dialectical progression towards perfection in which either thought or reality were the bearers of pre-ordained purposes contained within the historical process itself.

13 Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov (1859–1943) was a Russian historian involved in the foundation of the Cadet Party. Barred from an academic career because of his political views, between 1896 and 1901 he wrote a multi-volume work, *Outlines of Russian Culture*, which he completed in prison after being arrested for making a political speech. He spent much time abroad, publishing an account of the conditions leading up to the events of 1905–7 in English (Miliukov 1905). In 1917 he served in the first Provisional Government as foreign minister, a post from which he was compelled to resign after his telegram affirming Russia's continued adherence to the *Entente* was exposed.

which advanced personalities have played, play and cannot fail to play in the history of the development of the revolutionary class.<sup>14</sup> Now the stance of the 'Economists' is repudiated by just about every Russian Social Democrat. And I could not be more glad about this situation, as the coarse and harmful mistake of the 'Economists' very much grieved and irritated me. But from the fact that none of us now agree with the 'Economists', it does not in the least follow that the question of the attitude of the socialist intelligentsia to the 'people' has been resolved by us without mistakes. It is possible to be mistaken – alas! – in a host of the most diverse and even opposite manners. Many among us now hold an opinion regarding this question which can be called *supplementary* to the opinion of the 'Economists': these two opinions *supplement* one another's truth, just as in geometry certain angles supplement one another to create a *straight line*. But just as no supplementary angle can be straight and must inevitably be more or less *acute*, equally no supplementary opinion can be *true* and it must be more or less *mistaken* in its *one-sidedness*. In the current situation, the element of error is divided in equal measure between that view which is held by the 'Economists' and that which replaced it in the minds of a certain section of our comrades, each of them comparable to an acute angle of 45 degrees.

The view which has substituted itself for the rejected opinion of the 'Economists' consists in this: were there none of the celebrated 'bacillus', the chances for socialism would be next to zero, given that the working class cannot draw socialist conclusions on its own. This is the very same 'Economism' only stood on its head: the relation of social 'thought' to social 'being' is understood no better. In order to make a real and not an imaginary 'step forward' in the understanding of this relationship, we first of all have to look into this new mistake and get rid of this old tune in a new key.

We will now examine this matter with all the attention it deserves given its theoretical and practical importance.

The old tune in a new key just indicated, which appeared as a senseless and one-sided reaction to the one-sided and senseless opinion of the 'Economists', found its clearest expression in Lenin's pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?* It is to this pamphlet that we now turn.

There, on page 20, in the chapter 'The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social Democracy', we meet the following interesting opinion which relates to the celebrated strikes of the nineties: 'Taken by themselves, these strikes were a trade-unionist struggle, but still not a Social-Democratic one; they signified the awakening of the antagonism of work-

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14 I referred to this matter in my *Vademecum* [Plekhanov's footnote].

ers and owners, but among the workers there was not, nor could there have been consciousness of the irreconcilable opposition of their interests to the entire contemporary political and social system: Social-Democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the nineties remained a purely spontaneous movement'.<sup>15</sup>

It is, of course, impossible to deny that the tens of thousands of workers who participated in these strikes did not in any sense rise to the heights of Social-Democratic consciousness. But look how Lenin further substantiates his opinion:

We have said that *there could not have been* (Lenin's italics) Social-Democratic consciousness among workers. It could only have been brought in from the outside. The history of all countries testifies to the fact that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is only in a condition to develop exclusively trade-union consciousness, a conviction of the need to unite in unions, to conduct struggles with the owners, to obtain the promulgation of laws necessary to the workers by the government and so forth. The doctrine of socialism grew out of philosophical, historical and economic theories that were developed by educated representatives of the propertied classes. The founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged by their social position to the bourgeois intelligentsia. Likewise in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social Democracy emerged completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement, emerging as a natural and inevitable result of the development in the revolutionary-socialist intelligentsia's thought.<sup>16</sup>

In our country, Social-Democratic doctrine was genuinely and undoubtedly the natural and inevitable result of the development of thought among the 'revolutionary-socialist' intelligentsia. But where did Lenin get the idea that this thought developed 'completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement'? Now that is an interesting question.

If Lenin had been even a little more familiar with the history of our revolutionary movement, then he would know that 'the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' exercised a very strong influence on it at precisely the time when the old Populist theory was starting to come apart at the seams, owing

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15 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 375. A few words present in the passage according to this edition of the text are missing from Plekhanov's citation.

16 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 375.

to new, unforeseen demands of life. One can find several highly instructive examples of this in the revolutionary literature from the end of the 1870s, as the unexpected appearance on the stage of history of the proletariat with its characteristic social demands disorientated Populist writers and, through this, hastened a fundamental review of the Populist programme. In the first instance, I refer Lenin to the leading article in No. 4 of *Zemlia i Volia*, which concerned the strike on the Obvodnyi canal in St. Petersburg.<sup>17</sup>

'By the time about which we are now speaking', continues Lenin, 'half-way through the nineties, this doctrine had not only already become the fully-formed programme of the "Emancipation of Labour" group, it had also won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia'.<sup>18</sup>

In the capacity of a founder member of the former 'Emancipation of Labour' group, I categorically declare that, if we former 'Black Redistribution'-ists went from Populism to Marxism, then this was very much owing to 'the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement'. The influence on us of this growth could be furnished with documentary proof using certain extracts from *Chernyi Peredel*. But I will not do this, hoping that the reader will take me at my word, and I will limit myself to pointing out that, given that I, who played a certain role in the emergence of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, was fated to be 'mainly occupied with the workers' even whilst I was still a Populist and belonged to the 'Land and Freedom' organisation. I am convinced that it was the experience acquired by me during this period which prepared me for the adoption of Marxism. It is highly characteristic that another founder member of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group, Pavel Axelrod, also dedicated himself primarily to 'work among the workers'.

Unfortunately, space does not permit me to dwell any longer on this question. I refer interested readers to my pamphlet, *The Russian Workers in the Revolutionary Movement*.<sup>19</sup> From it they will see how severely Lenin distorted the indisputable historical truth to the benefit of his strange doctrine. I myself will now pass over to the 'West'.

It is, of course, fair to say that Marx and Engels belonged to the intelligentsia, though this fair remark is expressed by Lenin in a not entirely accurate manner: for example, Engels, the son of a rich industrialist, did not at all

<sup>17</sup> Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 1, pp. 44–55.

<sup>18</sup> Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 376.

<sup>19</sup> Plekhanov 1902. This pamphlet can be found in the Houghton Collection of Russian Revolutionary Literature. This version is a second edition, the first having appeared in the early 1890s, and it deals with the attitude of *Zemlia i volia* to industrial workers, strikes and the like.

belong to the intelligentsia *by his birth*. But this is an insignificant detail. What is incomparably more important is that the theoretical opinions of Marx and Engels were also developed under the strongest influence of 'the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' in Germany, France and England. This is known to everybody, and one can only be surprised at how Lenin did not know this. It would have been enough for him to have read, say, the English preface to *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klassen in England* in order to understand how decisively and strongly 'the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' in that country influenced the opinions of one of the founders of scientific socialism.<sup>20</sup> As regards Marx, anyone who has read even one article from *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*<sup>21</sup> knows that the revolutionary hopes of the future author of *Capital* were placed in a relation of close dependence on 'the spontaneous workers' movement' from the very beginning. Finally, if Lenin had not the time to make this type of literary enquiry, then he could have tested his bold theory *a priori* with the help of the following simple argument.

Marx and Engels recognised the proletariat as the main revolutionary force of our time, a force whose historical mission consisted in the replacing of the capitalist mode of production with a *socialist* one. But in order for them to recognise the proletariat as such a force, the presence of two conditions was necessary: firstly, the antagonism of classes and the rapid 'spontaneous growth of the workers' movement'; secondly, an attentive attitude to these phenomena on their part, on the part of those who were in their turn called to put socialism on a scientific basis.<sup>22</sup> It is clear, therefore, that it is *completely unthinkable* to consider the development of scientific socialism 'completely independent of

20 Engels's 1892 preface to the English edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 27, pp. 257–69) examines the development of political consciousness in the English working class during the nineteenth century through movements such as Chartism, which Plekhanov sees as evidence of workers 'spontaneously going beyond trade-union consciousness' – in other words, acquiring revolutionary socialist ideas independent of any tutelage from members of higher social strata.

21 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 3, pp. 3–129 ('A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right'). Plekhanov is probably referring to the 1844 'Introduction' to the work here. However, it is hard to see how this philosophical critique of Hegel from a broadly materialist, but scarcely dialectical, point of view contributes to Plekhanov's argument against Lenin's characterisation of Social-Democratic consciousness. One suspects that Plekhanov is trying to 'blind his reader with science' at this point.

22 'The socialism of the most recent times, by its content, appears to be the result of observations regarding the antagonism between the owning and non-owning classes, the capitalists and hired labourers, which dominates in modern society on the one hand,



the spontaneous development of the workers' movement'. If Lenin had taken a little time to consider this, he would have quickly struck out his thesis, which could have made some sense under the pen of an *idealist* writer, but which appears unexpectedly senseless when advanced and defended by a man who – not without success – has presented himself as a partisan of the *materialist theory of history*.

'The doctrine of socialism' really did 'grow from those philosophical, historical and economic theories which were developed by the educated representatives of the owning classes, the intelligentsia'. But so long as the intelligentsia 'developed' its socialist theory, not 'completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' – *this was not and could never have been the case* – but only whilst failing to devote all the attention to it that this growth deserved – during that time, *socialism remained utopian* and, as Mehring remarked about French Utopian Socialism, it remained more capable of *obscuring* the class consciousness of the proletariat than of clarifying it.<sup>23</sup> How then can Lenin lose sight of this? How could he so strongly come to resemble that Krylov hero who *failed to notice an elephant*?<sup>24</sup>

'Philosophical, historical and economic theories', and *ideas* in general are never 'developed' by ideologues 'completely independent' of social history and of the 'spontaneous movement' of the people in the midst of which they emerge. And the 'spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' represents the greatest, the most important and most influential phenomenon in the internal *life* of European society of the nineteenth century. One might ask whether it is possible to admit even for a minute, even for a 100th part of a second, that scientific socialism – the greatest, most important and most influential phenomenon in the history of the European social *science* of this century – emerged and developed 'completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement'? It is completely impossible! Even Professor Kareev no longer claims this.<sup>25</sup> How was Lenin not ashamed to write such . . . oddities?

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and observations regarding the anarchy existing in production on the other'. (Engels) [Plekhanov's footnote. See Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 24, p. 285].

23 Mehring 1902, p. 4 [Plekhanov's footnote].

24 This tale, by the Russian fabulist Ivan Andreevich Krylov (1769–1844), concerns a visitor to a natural-history museum who is fascinated by various bugs and other minute creatures, but does not remember seeing the elephant. It is often translated as 'The Inquisitive Man' and it expresses the idea of not being able to see the wood for the trees (Krylov 1946d).

25 Nikolai Ivanovich Kareev (1850–1931) was a Russian historian specialising in the French Revolution. Politically liberal, he was dismissed from St. Petersburg University in 1899 as a result of alleged influence on student disturbances and was only able to return to his post

Furthermore, where did he get the idea that 'the history of all countries testifies to the fact that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is only in a condition to develop exclusively trade-union consciousness'? It 'testifies' to nothing of the sort. It does not in the least show what Lenin sees in it. But this is not surprising. If it is true that the fundamental position of historical materialism, which states that the *thought* of people is defined by their *being*, and if the basic theorem of scientific socialism which states that socialist revolution is the necessary consequence of capitalism's own contradictions does not deceive us, then it is clear that the workers of capitalist countries would come to *socialism* at a given stage of social development even if they were left 'to their own devices'. Marx and Engels understood and explained this very well. Already in 1845 Marx, debating with Bruno Bauer, indicated that 'the proletariat as a proletariat', *by virtue of its position in capitalist society*, would arrive at the abolition of private property and would complete a socialist revolution.<sup>26</sup> To this, Marx added:

this is not a question of what goal one specific proletarian or another or even the whole proletariat sets itself at the moment. It is a question of what this class represents and what, by virtue of this existence (*diesem Sein gemäss*), it will be compelled to do historically. Its goal and its historical activity are tangibly and unquestionably defined by its own everyday position, and by the whole organisation of modern civil society. And there is no need to expand upon the fact that a significant section of the English and French proletariat already know their historical task and are permanently working so as to bring this consciousness to full clarity.<sup>27</sup>

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in 1906. In terms of his philosophy of history, he was regarded as an idealist by later Soviet scholars but remained a member of the Academy of Sciences until his death.

26 See *Die heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik. Gegen Bruno Bauer und Consorten* in the second volume of 'Nachlass', published by Mehring 1902, p. 132. [Plekhanov's footnote – see also Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, pp. 35–6. One passage from this section seems particularly relevant to Plekhanov's argument, though he does not cite in full for some reason: 'Private property as private property, as wealth, is compelled to maintain *itself* and thereby its opposite, the proletariat, in *existence*. That is the *positive* side of the antithesis, self-satisfied private property. The proletariat, on the contrary, is compelled as proletariat to abolish itself and thereby its opposite, private property, which determines its existence, and which makes it proletariat. This is the *negative* side of the antithesis, its restlessness within its very self, dissolved and self-dissolving private property'].  
 27 Mehring 1902, p. 133. [Plekhanov's footnote – Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 36].

This – as the reader can see – is nothing like the ‘trade-union consciousness’ which, according to the words of Lenin, the proletariat can attain ‘exclusively by its own efforts’.<sup>28</sup> Engels entirely agrees with Marx on this matter. Describing the position of the working class in England, he shows that the English workers cannot be satisfied with their position and that this position should compel them to strive for the elimination of the present state of affairs. ‘The English worker, hardly able to read and still less able to write’, he says, ‘knows very well nonetheless where his interests and the interests of the entire nation lie; he knows what the special interests of the bourgeoisie consist in and what he can expect from this bourgeoisie’.<sup>29</sup>

The first expression of dissatisfaction of the oppressed class is, in the words of Engels, crime against property, the volume of which grows together with the growth of industry.<sup>30</sup> But the workers are soon convinced that these crimes do nothing to help. Crime is only the protest of the individual against the existing order. As a class, the workers only came into opposition to the bourgeoisie *when they started to resist the introduction of machine production*. But even this sort of opposition spread only into separate localities and was directed only against definite aspects of the then current situation. This did nothing to help either. It was necessary to find a new form of opposition and it was found in *workers’ unions* (‘trade unionism’ – GP). These unions could not introduce real changes in the relation of hired labour to capital but they helped the workers obtain certain partial improvements and most importantly – they would develop a consciousness among workers that the rule of the bourgeoisie was based only on the competition of workers among themselves: once the workers stopped competing with one another, once they did not want to submit to exploitation on the part of the bourgeoisie, the reign of property (*das Reich des Besitzes*) would come to an end.<sup>31</sup>

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28 See p. 432 of the same volume: ‘Die Arbeiter, von den Verhältnissen getrieben ... allgesamt als eine Klasse mit ihren besonderen Interessen und Grundsätzen ... der Bourgeoisie nach gemeinsamen Plane und mit vereinter Macht zu Leibe rücken’ [Plekhanov’s footnote – Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, p. 92].

29 ‘Die Lage’ first edition, pp. 143–4 [Plekhanov’s footnote – Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, pp. 410–11].

30 Ibid., p. 258 [Plekhanov’s footnote – Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 502].

31 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 507. This is a very important passage, the significance of which has, up to now, been insufficiently valued in the explanation of the historical role of the workers’ movement and its chances of victory by the majority of Social-Democratic writers. The idea is repeated almost word for word in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* – see p. 16 of my translation, second edition (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 6, p. 496). [Plekhanov’s footnote].

Engels very well understood that the present state of affairs would remain unchanged in its essential features if the workers limited themselves to stopping competition amongst themselves, in other words if they did not go further than 'trade unionism'. But they 'have to do this . . . necessity requires them to destroy not just one part of competition, but competition *in general* – and this they will do. Already, the workers are more and more clearly seeing how poverty brings about competition; they recognise more clearly than the bourgeoisie itself that the competition of enterprises with one another, whilst provoking commercial crises, also squeezes the workers and that this too should be eliminated: they will soon realise how they are to set about this task'.<sup>32</sup>

Naturally it would be utterly absurd to understand Engels in the sense that economic necessity, whilst pushing the proletariat into a more and more decisive struggle with *capitalism* at the same time instigates the theory of scientific socialism in their heads of its own accord. But economic necessity conceives and drives the movement of the working class, the theoretical expression of which is scientific socialism, to its logical conclusion – to socialist revolution. This was the opinion which Marx and Engels held right from the time they first formulated their social outlook. From this – purely scientific – point of view, the historical role of the working class is not in the least presented in the light in which Lenin shows it to us in his pamphlet, which tries to instil the conviction in the reader that, where it is left to its own devices, the proletariat is not in a position to go beyond the narrow limits of trade unionism.

*According to Lenin, the working class, when left to itself, is only capable of fighting for the conditions of the sale of its efforts on the basis of capitalist relations of production. According to Marx and Engels, this class inevitably fights to eliminate these relations, to complete a socialist revolution.*

Who is right?

Judge it as you wish, but if you think that Lenin is right, do not call yourself a follower of Marx and Engels.

Marxism – that is an entirely different kettle of fish.

32 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 508. The 'critics' noted in this connection that, nonetheless, economic necessity itself had not up to that time led to workers' socialism in England, a country in which capitalism was more developed than anywhere else. Given that this argument can now be advanced against me by some 'hard' comrade, I refer to the fact that, after Engels had written his book on the situation of the English workers, that same economic necessity placed England in an *exclusive position* thanks to which its proletariat lost the revolutionary ambitions inspiring it in the 30s and 40s. Regarding this, see the 'Appendix', also written by Engels, to the American edition of the English translation of his book, especially pp. v–vi (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 26, pp. 399–405). Now, economic necessity, removing England's exclusive economic position, again turns the workers' eyes towards socialism – though still to a weak extent [Plekhanov's footnote].

It is superfluous to add that the founders of scientific socialism never even came within a cannon's shot of this opinion, which our 'Economists' later promoted. Marx and Engels knew very well how to appreciate the great significance of 'revolutionary bacillus'.

When Engels studied the position of the working class in England, he was firmly convinced that the workers' movement already 'spontaneously' founded there would lead to a socialist revolution. But this did not stop him from acknowledging and from contending that much could be gained in the cause of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat from the assimilation of socialist ideas by this class. He advised English socialists, who rarely took an active part in the struggle of the workers with the factory owners, to take on the role of 'bacillus'.<sup>33</sup> But he noted that, in order to do this, English socialism had to fundamentally change its character and become *purely proletarian*. This last observation once again proves how alien was Engels to the wild thought that revolutionary socialism must be developed 'completely independent of the workers' movement'.

To repeat, Marx and Engels very well understood the significance of 'revolutionary bacillus'. But they would have read it a very severe lecture if it, the *bacillus of revolution*, having been subject to the harmful influence of the *bacillus of self-conceit and subjectivism*, thought to *juxtapose the working masses to itself* and to assert that, so long as it did not bless these masses with the revolutionary grace of its consciousness, the latter would remain in spiritual and material dependence on the bourgeoisie and it would not be capable of bringing down capitalism or even merely 'expropriating the expropriators'.<sup>34</sup> When 'Bruno Bauer & co' permitted themselves something of the order of such a juxtaposition, Marx came down on them with caustic mockery, maintaining with complete justification that the juxtaposition of 'critical criticism' to the masses was nothing more than a new modification of the old opposition between *spirit* and *matter*. 'If criticism', he wrote, 'were more familiar with the movement of the lower classes of the people then . . . the new prosaic and poetic literature issuing from these classes in England and in France would prove to it that they

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33 See too what an active role he recommends to the American socialist 'bacillus' in the foreword to the above-mentioned American publication of the book cited above. This foreword is dated 26 January 1887. (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 26, pp. 434–42). [Plekhanov's footnote].

34 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 35, p. 750. The origin of this well-known socialist battle-cry appears to be the penultimate chapter of Marx's *Capital*, Volume I.

are capable of raising themselves mentally without being directly blessed by the Holy Spirit of Critical Criticism'.<sup>35</sup>

'The opposition between Spirit and Matter', Marx continues, 'is the Critical organisation of society, according to which Spirit, or Criticism represents the work of organisation, the masses the raw material and history the product'.<sup>36</sup>

Not otherwise would Marx speak of the theory of Lenin for whom, like 'critical criticism', the masses are only an inanimate raw material on which operations are carried out that are marked with the sign of a gift from the Holy Intelligentsia.

The 'hard' reader 'screams blue murder'. 'You are distorting Lenin's thought! You portray him as some kind of subjectivist even though he simply developed the idea of Kautsky which is laid out in detail in the article, "Die Revision des Programms der Sozialdemokratie in Oesterreich"!' <sup>37</sup> This is unacceptable! I will now call together the other hards and suggest writing a protest against you!

Calm yourself, 'hard' comrade, the protests now being written by you with an entrancing facility that was previously the monopoly of the 'socialist-revolutionaries' are not unknown to me. But still, before writing a 'protest', hear me out to the end. Maybe you will find that there is no cause for protest.

On page 27 of his pamphlet, Lenin indeed cites a long extract from Kautsky's article dedicated to the new draft programme of the Austrian Social Democracy then being discussed (October 1901). And in this extract, indeed, it is said that socialist consciousness is something which is introduced into the class struggle of the proletariat from the outside and which does not emerge spontaneously from within it. But Lenin must have taken a very inattentive attitude towards Kautsky's view on the proletarian movement prior to referencing this opinion in corroboration of his own inventions.

First of all, I draw the reader's attention – be he 'hard' or not hard – to the following passage in the same article by the same Kautsky. 'But what increases in any case is this opposition between labour and capital, the contradiction between the capitalist tendency towards increasing dependency (of hired

35 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 135.

36 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 243.

37 Kautsky 1901. A passage from this article is cited by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* as part of his argument concerning Social-Democratic consciousness (Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 5, p. 384). In the article, Kautsky examines draft changes to be made to the 'Hainfeld' programme (1888) of the Austrian Social Democrats, which were subsequently approved by the 1901 Party Congress in Vienna. Among other things, Kautsky criticises the idea expressed in the revisions that the situation of the proletariat itself produces socialist consciousness, and he argues that scientific socialist ideas have to be introduced to the working class by an outside agency, socialist intellectuals.

labour on capital – GP) and the growing demand among the proletariat for independence – contradictions which make class struggle and the ambition of overthrowing the capitalist class inevitable so long as capitalism exists; these contradictions will only disappear when they are resolved'.<sup>38</sup>

As we can see, the contradiction indicated here provokes the ambition of overthrowing the capitalist class in the clearly expressed opinion of Kautsky, and the more these contradictions grow – and Kautsky points to precisely this growth – all the more should the ambition provoked by it be strengthened. Is this not so? It seems that it is. What then does this ambition of overthrowing the capitalist class signify? Clearly, nothing other than *an ambition to destroy capitalist relations of production*, to put an end to capitalism, to make a *socialist* revolution. Is this not so? It seems that it is. Now I ask: is this what Lenin says? Not at all. Kautsky – just like both Engels in the above citation from his book on the state of the working class in England, and Marx in the book directed against Bruno Bauer – says that a contradiction inherent in capitalism unavoidably provokes the ambition of destroying capitalist relations of production among the workers, and having ineffectually referred to it, Lenin assures us that this contradiction can only push the proletariat into struggle carried out *on the basis* of these relations. *Kautsky is true to Marxism: Lenin betrays it*. Tasso, in Goethe, hearing Antonio, exclaims: 'Mit Beifall und Verehrung hör' ich dich'. To which Antonio answers: 'Und dennoch denkst du wohl bei diesen Worten, Ganz etwas Anders, als ich sagen will'.<sup>39</sup> Kautsky could say the same to Lenin regarding his own words 'heard with approval and admiration' and cited by the latter: '*You hear in them something quite different from what I want to say*'.

I see that the 'hard' reader is again 'indignant' and again, like the vulgar Socialist Revolutionaries is ready to write a 'protest'. But I again beg him to listen further.

In the argument with Bernstein, Kautsky, refuting the absurd interpretation of Marx's views which was given by poor Eduard in the manner of bourgeois

38 *Die Neue Zeit*, 1901–2, No. 3, p. 75 [Plekhanov's footnote].

39 'I hear your words with approval and admiration – But nevertheless you hear in them something quite different from what I want to say'. This is a reference to Act ii Scene iii of Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso* (Goethe 1888), which is about the Italian court poet of the same name (1844–95), his unrequited love for the sister of his employer, Leonora d'Est, and his subsequent descent into madness. Antonio Montecatino is his enemy, a powerful politician who opposes and frustrates his suit.



economists of the Schulze-Gaevernitz<sup>40</sup> type, laid out what he justifiably considered to be the true opinion of Marx – which he himself unconditionally agreed with – in the following manner:

The destruction of petty production, which earlier constituted its predominant form, creates proletarians, hired labour. The more capitalist production develops on the ruins of handicraft production, the more the possibility of hired labour obtaining independence from exploitation and from enslavement by capital, as an isolated producer on the basis of private property, decreases; the ambition to abolish private property (Kautsky puts it even more strongly: *verlangen*<sup>41</sup> – GP) is all the more strengthened. Thus, together with the proletariat, socialistic tendencies among proletarians and those who adopt the point of view of the proletariat emerge with the natural force of an inevitability.<sup>42</sup>

Kautsky adds: 'Thus the emergence of socialist aspirations is explained'. Indeed it is explained thus. And this explanation represents that 'perpendicular line', that much sought-after truth which agrees entirely with the materialist theory of history and is equally far from the 'acute angles' of one-sidedness which belong to both Lenin and the 'Economists'. The proletariat is no 'Matter', condemned by nobody knows whom to revolve in the vicious circle of 'trade unionism' and which is only capable of escaping this circle with the help of 'Spirit', 'bacillus' or 'intelligentsia'. No! As a result of the invincible tractional force of modern social relations, it moves more or less quickly in the direction of *socialism* of its own accord, it displays *socialist aspirations* by itself. But the 'bacillus' can speed up the movement, can make it more intelligent and goal-oriented and it can play a highly useful educational role in the midst of the proletariat in its fight with the capitalist class. And this is what its great historical significance consists in.

The 'Emancipation of Labour' group, the Social-Democratic views of which were *always directly dependent upon* 'the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement', always ascribed precisely this significance to the 'bacillus'. It also remained true to Marxism in precisely this connection. And this is why 'the liquidation of the fourth period' of our movement – which is characterised

40 Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz (1864–1943) was a professor of economics at Freiberg University and a left-liberal politician who served in the Reichstag from 1912. He opposed the doctrine of class struggle and advocated 'social peace'.

41 'Desire', 'urge', 'longing' or 'demand' (German).

42 'Bernstein und das sozialdemokratische Programm', Stuttgart, 1899 p. 53 (Kautsky 1899) [Plekhanov's footnote].

by the influence of Lenin's metaphysics, just as the third period of it was characterised by the influence of 'Economism' – should consist in, among other things, a belated rising to the theoretical point of view of this group. Even the extremely short-sighted will soon see this.

So, 'hard' comrades! You yourselves, I hope, now see that your 'boss' is profoundly and – it is no use denying it – shamefully mistaken. Or do you still not see it? Well, read further.

As regards that draft programme of the Austrian Party, Kautsky said at the Party Congress in Vienna, in the afternoon session of 4 November 1901:

It is true that the workers' movement cannot give rise to Social-Democratic thought by itself. The workers' movement gives rise to a socialist instinct; it gives rise to the demand for socialism because individual proletarians all the more feel that by their own force, as separate individuals, they cannot attain ownership of means of production. But the theoretical understanding that is necessary in order for this instinct to be brought to clear consciousness did not come from the midst of the proletariat because proletarians lack all the necessary conditions for scientific work. This conviction was born in the heads of bourgeois scholars who had sufficient honesty and impartiality to not be blinded by the interests of the bourgeoisie. All our great founding socialists belonged to this strata: Saint-Simon, Fourier, Lassalle,<sup>43</sup> Marx and Engels. But their theory would

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43 Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–64) was one of the pioneers of the Social-Democratic movement in Germany. Active in the 1848 revolution as a democrat, in 1862 he once more became involved in politics in the capacity of a legal expert during a constitutional conflict within the Prussian state between the King and parliament. During this episode he was tried and fined for violating restrictions on press freedom, but subsequently became an ally of Bismarck in helping establish universal suffrage, which for the latter appeared to serve as a means of diluting the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie. To this same end, Lassalle helped establish the General German Workers' Association, a legal workers' political party which ultimately proved to be of fairly modest size, but which was also probably the first of its type, regularly securing the election of its candidates to the Reichstag during the period of German unification. Because of its essentially pro-regime position, it clashed with tendencies in the German workers' movement supporting the International Working Men's Association and the latter's leading influences, Marx and Engels, until the unification of the two trends in 1875. The result of this unification was a Social-Democratic Party in Germany which through successful electoral participation grew to a massive size. Thus, although Lassalle himself died in a duel unrelated to political matters at the height of his fame, leaving a somewhat ambiguous legacy to the German workers' movement, he is still remembered as one its founding fathers.

remain only a theory if a strata of gifted proletarians had not transferred it to the mass of the proletariat, if they had not fertilised the workers' movement and if they had not fused into one whole with it.<sup>44</sup>

These words first of all show that – according to Kautsky's idea and despite the untrue opinion of Lenin that is already too well-known to us – socialist theory did not in the least develop 'completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement'. Kautsky directly declares: 'From the union of the workers' movement with socialist theory, a new, Social-Democratic way of thinking arose, during the development of which workers not only studied socialist theoreticians, socialist theoreticians also studied the workers'.<sup>45</sup> Apart from this, Kautsky's speech at the Congress of the Austrian Party shows in what sense the idea, earlier expressed by him, of the introduction of socialist thought 'from without' into the proletariat should be understood. *Only clear consciousness, only learned theory* is brought 'from without', but the historical movement *beyond the bounds of trade unionism* – together with the birth of *socialist instinct* – is provoked by the very position of the proletariat and emerges in this class's own midst. This means that we find ourselves dealing with the same Kautskyan idea which we met in that passage in his book against Bernstein in which he states how it is necessary to understand Marx's opinion on this matter.<sup>46</sup> But here he expresses it in another context and therefore gives it a different formulation. Earlier, he wrote that capitalism engendered socialist aspirations – both among the proletariat itself and those of the higher classes who adopted their point of view – together with the proletariat; now he says that the socialist strivings of the proletariat, not being clarified by socialist theory, remain an *instinct* and do not amount to *Social-Democratic consciousness*. The new formulation, perhaps, is less successful than the old because certain inaccuracies and ambiguities have stolen into it: for example, Fourier<sup>47</sup>

44 Protokoll 1901, p. 124 [Plekhanov's footnote].

45 Ibid. [Plekhanov's footnote].

46 Chapter footnote 42 of this chapter.

47 Charles Fourier (1772–1837) in fact came from a petty-bourgeois background and earned his living working the offices of various merchant and trading companies. He was not university-educated. His thinking was eccentric, whimsical and visionary and he advocated the creation of communal living, women's rights, queer rights, free love and a world system based on the *phalanstère*, an institution of his own devising in which people lived together in apartment complexes and in which individuals were free to choose their own work. A small number of these communes were actually constructed in the United States. Fourier was identified as one of the pioneers of socialist thought by Engels in his pamphlet, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 24, pp. 281–325).

was not in the least a bourgeois scholar and Saint-Simon<sup>48</sup> can be counted among them only with reservations. Still, it is entirely clear what precisely is meant by socialist instinct in its opposition to socialist consciousness, given the fact that in social psychology it is not easy to draw a line between instinct and consciousness. But this question is not important for us. We needed to know whether Lenin has the right to cite Kautsky in support of his idea and we now see clearly that he has no such right.

'Instinctive socialism' should, according to Kautsky, lead to *socialist revolution*. And not just *instinctive socialism*. In his dispute with Mr. Bernstein, Kautsky expressed the firm conviction that the struggle of classes in capitalist society should, by its own implacable logic, place even proletarians *hostile to socialism* before such tasks, the fulfilment of which 'would strike the capitalist mode of production at its very heart'.<sup>49</sup> And this same conviction, which Kautsky takes in its entirety from Marx and Engels, lies at the basis of his work, *Die soziale Revolution*, which was translated into the Russian language *under Lenin's editorship*. These are Kautsky's own words:

I wanted to know what consequences *necessarily* (*mit Notwendigkeit*) stemmed from the political rule of the proletariat by virtue of its class interests and the needs of production, completely independent of that theoretical ground on which the proletariat would stand at the time of its victory. I accordingly got rid of every assumption about the influence of socialist doctrines on the proletariat. (Listen 'hards', listen! – GP). At the beginning of my investigation, I directly posed the question of how the proletariat would have to use its power. Not what it would want

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48 Claude Henri de Ronvoi, comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) was a French aristocrat. As a young man he fought in the American War of Independence as part of a French regiment sent to help the rebels. He amassed a fortune during the French Revolution by buying up nationalised church property and was imprisoned during the Terror. Having dissipated his wealth, he renounced his title, thereafter living in poverty and dedicating his life to study.

Saint-Simon advocated a socialism based on science and industry, in which all would work, in which there would be no exploiting classes and which involved the equality of the sexes. Like other utopian socialists of his era, he took these projects for reform to the existing authorities but was met with little sympathy. Certain short-lived attempts to create socialist colonies along Saint-Simonian lines were attempted in the early 1830s in France, but were broken up by the authorities owing to their perceived threat to morality and the social order. Nonetheless, Engels cites his thought, along with that of Fourier, as an important precursor to 'scientific' socialist doctrine in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

49 Kautsky 1899, p. 180 [Plekhanov's footnote].

on the basis of one or another theory or mood, but how it would be obliged to act on the basis of its class interests and as a result of economic necessity.<sup>50</sup>

Enough, Lenin did not understand either Kautsky or Engels or Marx: in general he did not understand scientific socialism's attitude to this question. *And his incomprehension appears to him in the form of the incapability of the proletariat to go beyond the limits of 'trade unionism', which to this end is presented by him as something which has fallen from heaven in its finished form, once and for always given and unchanging.*<sup>51</sup>

At our Second Congress Lenin, replying to one of his opponents, remarked:

They say: 'Lenin mentions nothing about countervailing tendencies and asserts absolutely that the workers' movement always tends towards submission to bourgeois ideology'. Indeed? And was it not said by me that the workers' movement is attracted to bourgeois-ness *thanks to the benevolent assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and his ilk?*<sup>52</sup>

There is no doubt that Lenin actually said this. But this does not improve the situation in the least. It is obvious – and no-one, ever, not even for a minute could doubt it – that the *bourgeois* Schulze-Delitzsch and those *intelligents* who somehow or other, consciously or unconsciously, share the ideas of Schulze-Delitzsch, try to subordinate the proletariat to their own bourgeois ideological influence. We would be as inexperienced in politics as infants at the breast if we were capable of arguing about this. But absolutely nothing follows from this. *The controversial question consists precisely in whether there is an economic necessity which provokes the 'need for socialism' in the proletariat, makes it 'instinctively socialist' and pushes it – even in cases where it is left to its own devices – onto the road of socialist revolution, despite the stubborn and unceasing efforts of the bourgeoisie to subordinate it to its ideological influence.* Lenin denies this, despite the clearly expressed opinion of all the theoreticians of scientific socialism. And this is what his great mistake consists in, his theoretical

50 'Die Neue Zeit', 22. Jahrgang, Band 1, Nr. 19, p. 591 [editor's footnote in Plekhanov 1923–7].

51 I will finally answer the question of why I did not reveal his mistakes immediately on the publication of his pamphlet, which caused so much noise but which was in essence very weak in all its aspects, *in the second part of this article, to which I refer the reader* [Plekhanov's footnote].

52 See the 'Minutes' of the Congress, p. 131. The italics are in the original [Plekhanov's footnote: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 169].

fall from grace which is yet more clearly outlined by his highly unsuccessful reference to 'Schulze-Delitzsch'.

Indeed, what do these Messrs 'Schulze-Delitzsch and their ilk' represent? In this matter there cannot be two opinions. They are also 'intelligentsia', only intelligentsia who do not pass over to the side of the proletariat, remaining true to the bourgeoisie. What happens if we take into consideration the influence of *these* intelligentsia – something we must do without question? The historical role of the proletariat *is always defined by the intelligentsia of one or another mode of thought* and its *own* aspirations, engendered by the economic peculiarities of its *own* situation, are not in the least bit relied upon by this unhappy class, cruelly swindled by history: it is as inert as a dead donkey, to use the energetic expression of Rabelais.<sup>53</sup> Is this what Lenin wanted to say? If yes then he is even more confused, because only those who do not understand what scientific socialism says about the historical mission of the proletariat can say this.

Thus, *the main argument introduced by Lenin at the Congress spoke not in favour of him but against him.*

I said above that for Marx, the opinion of Lenin on the relationship between the proletariat and the intelligentsia would have represented a new variant of the opinions of Bruno Bauer concerning the relationship between the 'critics' and the 'masses', not without reason and not in consequence of polemical passion. This would have undoubtedly been the case. Remember what Marx said about the opinion of Bruno Bauer.

This 'critic' started from the absolute idealism of Hegel, submitting it to his criticism. Whereas absolute spirit creates history in Hegel, for Bruno Bauer the place of absolute spirit is occupied – as Marx notes – by critical criticism:

Bruno Bauer declares Criticism to be the absolute spirit, and he himself to be Criticism. Just as the element of Criticism is banished from the masses, the element of the masses is excluded from Criticism. Criticism is therefore embodied, not in the masses, but in a small handful of the chosen, in Mr Bruno Bauer and his followers.<sup>54</sup>

What will this lead to? This is what: 'On one side sits the masses, a passive, non-spiritually creative and ahistorical, material element of history. On the

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53 'It was no more possible to draw a word from him than a fart from a dead donkey' (Rabelais 1894, vol. 1, ch 1, v 15).

54 Marx and Engels 1975–2005, Vol. 4, p. 86.

other side sits: Spirit, Criticism, Bruno Bauer and company, in the capacity of an active element from which all historical activity issues'.<sup>55</sup>

A familiar picture! This is just what we see in Lenin: on the one hand we have the working masses as a passive element, not possessing any drive of its own and heading wherever Schulze-Delitzsch and sometimes the socialist intelligentsia leads it, and on the other, the intelligentsia, socialism, Lenin and company in the capacity of the active element, the activity of which coincides with all the chances of the proletarian liberation movement and the socialist revolution.

We do not see *Marxism* in the opinion of Lenin but – I beg forgiveness for an ugly sounding word – *Bauerism*, and a new edition of *the theory of heroes and the crowd*, amended and supplemented in accordance with the very latest demands of the market.<sup>56</sup>

The theory of heroes and the crowd, lacking substance in and of itself and in receipt of some degree of plausibility only in epochs characterised by the undeveloped state of the class struggle, leads to highly significant problems in the practice of professional revolutionaries.

Marx says that Bruno Bauer, setting Hegel straight, 'declares Criticism to be the absolute spirit and he himself to be Criticism'. Just imagine such 'Criticism' setting about political activity which aimed to carry out a definite practical plan. Given that it declares itself to be the only active element in history, it considers the masses only in as much as it hopes that they will serve as a strong but obedient tool in its hands, and will go wherever their 'conscious' Lady – Criticism – is pleased to lead them.<sup>57</sup> However, this 'conscious' Lady does not usually attain any sort of serious influence on the masses, indeed she cannot

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55 Ibid.

56 It is interesting that even the bourgeois Sombart goes further than the Social Democrat Lenin, recognising that 'the workers' way of life necessarily (*mit Notwendigkeit*) provokes in him an aspiration towards socialism' (see Sombart 1901, p. 8). Having sensed in Lenin a supporter of the theory of heroes and the crowd, the Social Revolutionaries have hastened, as is well known, to declare him close to 'People's Will'. He deserves this, having distorted Marxism. But in the last analysis, in the programmatic sense, he is very far from 'People's Will' because with him the activity of the heroes necessarily presupposes a proletarian crowd. [Plekhanov's footnote. Werner Sombart (1863–1941): German academic sociologist interested in mass social movements and the historical emergence of capitalism].

57 The abstract noun 'criticism' ('*kritika*') is feminine in Russian, hence its characterisation here as 'Lady Criticism' ('*gospozha Kritika*'). Here Plekhanov appears to be mocking Bauer's supposed claim that he is the personification of a world-changing abstract idea by suggesting that criticism's realisation in a female form would be more appropriate.



attain such influence under any circumstances. One circle of the elect rises up against another which exhibits the same naïve and obdurate self-conceit, and a whole series of the most bitter arguments and pitiless conflicts starts between them, on which they concentrate all their attention, which swallows up all their forces and which paralyses all their efforts. In place of broad, emancipatory *class politics* comes narrow and pitiful *circle intrigue*, which is only replaced by a broader manner of thought and a more reasonable method of action when the intensifying and ever more strengthening *movement of the masses* visibly exposes all the ridiculous limitations of circle 'dictators' and all the pitiful futility of their efforts. The practice of Marxism is incompatible with the theory of heroes and the crowd; the theory of heroes and the crowd is incompatible with the practice of Marxism. And that is why Marx and Engels expressed such profound repugnance towards this theory both in those cases where it did not go beyond the bounds of abstract 'criticism' and – more so – when tiny messiahs and miniature dictators of different countries and all possible tendencies were inspired by it in their practical activity. In conversations with me – indeed, not only in conversations with me – Engels repeatedly and insistently pointed out that in Russia, thanks to the emerging workers' movement, the old conspiratorial practices of Nechaevism and Bakuninism were already dying out.<sup>58</sup> But we will not get rid of this outdated practice until we break with the theory of heroes and the crowd in its new – and we would hope its last – modification, that is, until we have got rid of the doctrine of Lenin concerning *the spontaneity of the masses and the consciousness of the Social Democracy*. This doctrine coloured the 'fourth period' of our movement to a significant degree, in several senses pushing us back compared to the third period.

In order to 'liquidate' the fourth period it is, prior to everything else, absolutely necessary to fully appreciate the complete lack of substance to this doctrine. This is *condition sine qua non*.

Having driven socialism from the masses and the masses from socialism, Lenin declares the socialist intelligentsia to be the demiurge<sup>59</sup> of socialist revolution and himself, along with his true unquestioning followers – socialist intelligentsia for the most part – to be the so-called super-intelligentsia. He accuses all those who do not agree with him of anarchist individualism and, in a struggle with them, he appeals to those very same *masses* who in his theory, as we have seen, play the role of passive *matter*. He beats his breast indignantly

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58 The reader probably knows that in practice the *anarchist* Bakunin was as decisive and as unyielding in his *centralism* as the Marxist Lenin [Plekhanov's footnote].

59 In Platonic and Gnostic philosophy, an artisan-like figure subordinate to God or the Gods, who was responsible for creating the universe in accordance with eternal ideas.

and clamours, full of righteous anger, that only the proletariat understands the full significance of organisation and discipline. His new pamphlet, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*,<sup>60</sup> is filled with clamour of this type and in it, *logically developing his ideas*, he at the same time took *many steps backwards* even in comparison to the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* – precisely thanks to the peculiar but implacable logic of these ideas.

Lenin's appeal to the proletariat reminds me of the outlook which our conservatives adopt towards the people from time to time. From the point of view of a conservative, the people are an ahistorical element in history, moved by the wise and vigilant care of the higher classes. But as soon as these classes start to sympathise even a little with pro-freedom ideas, the conservatives immediately remember popular wisdom and warn that the popular masses, inspired by this wisdom, will reduce these ideas to dust 'using their judgement'. With them, as with Lenin, the popular masses serve mainly as a means of scaring all those internal or external 'foes and adversaries' and of finally subjugating them...

Saying all this, I feel that the reader is ready to make a serious criticism of me: 'If this is so', he thinks, 'if Lenin's opinion is so wrong and harmful, and if it contradicts scientific socialism, then why were you silent up until now? Why did you not reveal the mistaken and harmful character of this opinion earlier? Or have you only now become convinced of its mistaken and harmful character?'

I reply: not only now. I found it untrue from the moment I encountered it. When I read the manuscript of the pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, I immediately said to Lenin and to other members of our Editorial Board that I saw quite enough theoretical mistakes in it. As regards 'spontaneity' and 'consciousness' in particular, I remarked to Lenin that the latter appeared in his work *wie aus der Pistol geschossen*<sup>61</sup> – to use the well-known expression of Hegel – and I insisted on the reworking of the passage, which seemed to me to be incorrect.<sup>62</sup> Lenin objected that the pamphlet was being issued in his own name and that

60 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 201–423. This pamphlet provides a detailed analysis of the debates and votes at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, dealing also with the *Iskra* caucus meetings and the Martovites' campaign for positions in the leading bodies of the RSDLP in the post-Congress period.

61 'As if fired from a pistol': in other words, without reference to what has been argued previously. According to Plekhanov, Hegel wrote this in relation to the position of the 'absolute spirit' in the philosophy of Schelling (Plekhanov 1961, Vol. 1, p. 605).

62 Some corroboration for this claim exists in the form of letters exchanged between the editors of *Iskra*: see Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 3, p. 400 and Vol. 4, pp. 107–8.

consequently a significant part of the Editorial Board's responsibility for it was removed. At the same time, several comrades in the Editorial Board said that I was taking too strict an attitude towards Lenin and that, despite the fact that he sometimes expressed himself incorrectly, he was nonetheless a firm supporter of orthodox Marxism. This argument did not seem to lack credibility. I never considered Lenin to be any kind of outstanding theorist and always found that he was organically incapable of dialectical thought. But I thought all the same that he valued the interests of theory and that the theory, the interests of which were dear to him, was *scientific socialism*. He seemed to me – making use of an expression we have met quite a lot in this article – more of an *instinctive* than a *conscious* Marxist, but I believed in the beneficial force of his 'orthodox' *instinct* and hoped that he would better assimilate, if not the *method*, then the *conclusions* of Marxism – things accessible even to a *metaphysician* when a clearer Marxist *consciousness* passes into his head *from without*. Besides, Lenin, whilst defending his position, all the same promised to 'set straight' the untenable passages in his pamphlet. Finally – *last but not least* – could I think that there were many readers to be found who would especially like the mistaken passage in the pamphlet, the weak side of the author's world view? Now, taught by bitter experience, I know that, if in any given literary production, very true and very mistaken opinions are to be found, then our readers will mostly favour not those which are true, but those which are mistaken; but back then I still did not know this sad truth and more than now relied on the readers' own judgement. I hoped that our 'practicals' would assimilate the useful though unoriginal idea from the pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, that organisation is necessary for us, and that Social Democracy cannot pass through even one of the 'stages' of its history without a political struggle, and I hoped that they would notice the weakness of those theoretical arguments with which Lenin defended his respectable but already stale truth without my prompting. And, given that there were already too many disagreements in our Social-Democratic literature without this and, given that adding to them without urgent practical necessity was to say the least superfluous, I decided not to come out publicly against Lenin. But that I was far from satisfied with his opinions is clear from the fact that one day, with the impression of his pamphlet and also of my ongoing arguments with him over the programme fresh in my mind, I expressed my fear to comrade Martov that 'now a struggle between the metaphysical Marxism of Tulin and the dialectical materialism of Beltoz is beginning'.<sup>63</sup> Comrade Martov has probably not forgotten this conversation.

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63 Tulin was the author of one of the articles in the collection 'Material for the Characterisation of the Economic Development of Russia', which was printed in the

I hope he remembers that, though he tried to calm me in relation to this point, I was anything but calmed.

When the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* came out, it turned out that Lenin had changed almost nothing. I did not like this, naturally, and our relations with one another were very strained over the course of a certain period. But then they started to improve. Spending more than a month in London – where *Iskra* was then being published – during the autumn of 1902, I came away from a sufficient number of private conversations with Lenin with the conviction that Marxist *consciousness* was indeed rapidly entering his head and that the point of view of the *What Is To Be Done?* pamphlet was one that had been left behind. Then, because the celebrated Rostov strike had occurred, I wrote two articles for *Iskra* in which I deliberately raised, once again, the question of the relation between the *heroes* and the *crowd* in our cause and answered them in a manner that was not at all Leninist.<sup>64</sup> As far as I know, Lenin never made any objections to these articles in the meetings of the Editorial Board. This all the more convinced me that our *instinctive* orthodox was all the more becoming *conscious*. Finally it fell to me to disprove and ridicule many of those

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spring of 1895 and then suppressed by the censor. The article simply stank of metaphysics. [Plekhanov's footnote. 'Tulin' was one of the pseudonyms of Lenin: see Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 1, pp. 333–508].

- 64 See Plekhanov 1923–7, Vol. 12, pp. 270–7 and pp. 316–24/*Iskra* No. 32, pp. 1–2. & No. 33, pp. 1–2. The Rostov general strike broke out in early November 1902 in response to errors made in the pay of a group of railway workers. Up to thirty thousand workers may have participated, and the Don Committee of the RSDLP was very active both in promoting solidarity action with the railway workers throughout the city and in raising a whole series of city-wide economic demands, such as the nine-hour day, pay increases and the elimination of fines in all enterprises.

In his articles on the strike, Plekhanov defends the Don Committee against accusations that it had not sufficiently politicised the workers by focusing on 'economic' demands and by failing to lead the strikers in street demonstrations with a clearly anti-autocratic character. Plekhanov replies to these charges with a counter-criticism of small 'heroic' groups who had tried to organise such 'political' measures but did not get a response from the workers, arguing that such groups had become too accustomed to participating in small but daring protests which, receiving ill-treatment from the police, could win the passive sympathy of the working masses whilst failing to actively involve them. He argues that the Don Committee engaged more effectively with the workers by raising their level of consciousness, even though the latter were still not displaying a great degree of politicisation. Consequently, these articles seem to express Plekhanov's fear, also expressed in 'Centralism and Bonapartism', of an excessively 'political' reaction to 'Economism' which would take a negative attitude to economic struggles, even if a connection between this overreaction and the Lenin faction is not convincingly demonstrated.

narrowly-metaphysical arguments which Lenin sometimes put forward at the time of the dispute over our draft programme in one or two later articles.<sup>65</sup> And these articles did not meet with objection on the part of Lenin, so much as praise. All this did not leave in me the least doubt that he had taken several very significant 'steps forward' in his development and had left his old mistakes behind.

I travelled to our Congress with this impression and there, among other things, I had to take part in debates regarding that very opinion of Lenin which I have criticised in the present article. Convinced that Lenin had already rejected this opinion, I did not consider it necessary to argue about it and I even tried to stop the debates relating to it as completely irrelevant to the discussion of *our programme*. Not imagining that I would succeed in doing this, I began, as the French say, *plaider les circonstances atténuantes*.<sup>66</sup> 'Lenin', I said, 'did not write a dissertation on the philosophy of history, but a political work'. In other words, this meant that from the philosophic-historical point of view from which I have considered it, for example, here – the view of Lenin would not stand up to criticism. If I am not mistaken, comrade Martov understood this explanation in the sense that I, in a mild way, declared myself to be not in solidarity with Lenin in so far as he was the author of the pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, and this was true. However, at the Congress I was not mainly concerned with deflecting responsibility for *What Is To Be Done?* from myself but, without producing superfluous arguments and disagreements, with finding a theoretically correct formula which could unite both the opinion of comrade Martynov, who was attacking Lenin, and that new opinion which – as it then seemed to us – Lenin was coming to share under the influence of a gradual acquisition by him *from without* of Social-Democratic *consciousness*. 'You say', I objected to comrade Martynov, 'that socialism is worked out by the whole proletariat, including its conscious part, in other words, all of those who have gone over to its side. If you want to say this, I not only see no cause for breaking with Lenin, I see no cause for breaking with you'.<sup>67</sup>

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65 I cannot name these articles for reasons beyond my control [Plekhanov's footnote].

66 Mitigate (French).

67 Nothing similar to this conciliatory idea appears in the minutes of the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which are a stenographic record of the debates, albeit an imperfect one. In these minutes, Plekhanov flatly contradicts the arguments made in the present article, stating that Engels and Lenin were at one in their conceptions of socialist consciousness, whilst denying any rift with the latter, claiming that this is what the 'Economist' delegates were aiming at (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 158–9 and pp. 171–2).

This last formulation placed all of us in the theoretically correct position, whilst not in the least touching upon the question of how much Lenin was mistaken in his pamphlet. If we were to set about thoroughly examining this question then we would be obliged, whilst disputing Lenin, to equally object to those of his comrades attacking him, given that they had not managed to uncover the weakest side of his opinions. But a consideration of this question seemed to me out of place in the discussion of our draft – which was *not* worked out by Lenin<sup>68</sup> – and superfluous in general. Lenin, who made the very unsuccessful attempt to atone for his theoretical errors, mentioned above, was himself aware that, in the argument with the 'Economists', he *went too far and bent the stick in the other direction*. What was there to argue and get excited about? It only remained for us to embrace the son, who was once *prodigal in theory*, and to kill the fatted calf in celebration of the shining through of Leninist *consciousness*.<sup>69</sup>

True, in my ambition to put an end to argument about differences which belonged – in what was my opinion at the time – to the sphere of a *past* that was gone and never to return, I myself went too far, *vindicating* Lenin too much. Sometimes I spoke as nannies speak about mischievous children who they want to correct without resorting to *punishment*: 'It is not Vania (or, on other occasions, Volodia) who acted up, it was the cat, and Volodia (or, on other occasions, Vania) is a good boy, who would never act up'. This old pedagogic method was a mistake, something I now very much regret; now I see how much more useful for the cause it would have been to display the theoretical antics of the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* in a bright light. If one of the comrades

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68 Plekhanov distorts the truth somewhat when he claims that the *Iskra-Zaria* programme submitted to the Second Congress of the RSDLP was his own work. Though he is correct in the sense that his own draft, rather than Lenin's, was taken as the starting point for this document, he should have acknowledged that Lenin played an important role in working it up into the form in which it was finally presented to the Congress. Indeed, the conflict between Lenin and Plekhanov over the programme was in fact quite sharp and protracted and it was in the end resolved by means of various compromises, a circumstance which makes Plekhanov's denial of Lenin's authorship seem false. (See Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 6, pp. 15–76; Lenin *et al.* 1924–85, Vol. 2, pp. 15–171].

69 Not for the first time, Plekhanov here uses religious imagery to support his idea: the parable of the 'prodigal son' is found in Luke ch. 15 vv. 11–32, and deals with a younger son who demands his portion of a legacy before the father dies, only to leave the family and squander the money. Reduced to penury, the son returns to his father, who celebrates his return with a feast, an event which provokes resentment in the older, more dutiful son. The parable deals with the theme of 'sinners' who repent, emphasising their value and the mercy of God in relation to them.

wants to reproach me with this mistake, I will not argue with him or oppose him in the least. But I will say to myself in consolation: they have reproached me so often with a passion for *arguments* that it is perhaps not bad, for variety's sake, to be criticised for a superfluous *love of peace*.

Incidentally, regarding my love of argument. With Mr. Struve and the 'Economists', I also started to argue only when I was convinced that their *theoretical* mistakes and sophisms (Mr. Struve) could have harmful *practical* consequences for us. It is true, I have never been adverse to arguing 'pure theory', but many, many reasons often compelled me to hold back from this pleasure. Engels justly said that one only meets theorists of the purest type among reactionaries.

Only after the Congress did I see that my extreme peaceableness in relation to Lenin and my firm intention of not *divorcing* him<sup>70</sup> was *harmful* for our Party. Only after the Congress was it finally clarified to me what a great influence the pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, had exerted on our 'practicals' and to what degree it had exerted influence on many of them *through its mistakes*. Only after the Congress did observation show me that Lenin's mistaken view of the working masses as the 'ahistorical element of history', as 'Matter' moved towards socialism by 'Spirit' acting from without, defined to a significant degree the *tactical and organisational* concepts both of Lenin himself and many of our 'hard' practicals.<sup>71</sup> Finally, only after Congress did I understand how bitterly I had been mistaken when I ascribed *forward* movement to Lenin. In reality, he had never thought of going in this direction. That popularity which his deviation from Marxism created for him, and which made his ideas more accessible to those 'practicals' least prepared for the comprehension of Marxism, could not have been more satisfying for him. He not only failed to let go of sticks bent by him in the polemic with the 'Economists', but sat on the

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70 See my answer to Akimov in the 'Minutes' (Plekhanov's footnote – Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 171–2).

71 This connection between mistaken theory and harmful practice makes complete sense. People who share the opinion that Social-Democratic thought can be developed 'completely independent of the spontaneous growth of the workers' movement' can permit themselves a very great degree of 'independence' from the workers' movement in general, becoming in their practice like the conspirators of the good old times. In the interests of justice, I note that several comrades who once belonged to the camp of the 'Economists' drew my attention to the practical mistakes and extremism of the too 'hard' *Iskra*-ites even before the Congress. Though I myself noted some of those extremities and mentioned them in letters to the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, the evidence of the former 'Economists' seemed to me to be exaggerations. Now it turns out that they did not exaggerate as much as I thought [Plekhanov's footnote].



top of that curved stick and revealed the most unmistakeable intention to travel on it – accompanied by the enthusiastic cries of all the counsellor Ivanovs<sup>72</sup> of our Party – in the direction of *dictatorship*. All this fundamentally changed the state of affairs in my eyes, and I decided to fight and to argue, following a rule that is indisputably true in this case: *better late than never*.

In a later issue of *Iskra* I will show the mistaken character of the opinions of Lenin regarding the relationship of *politics* to *economic* struggle and then expose the connection of his *theoretical* mistakes to his *organisational* plans. I do not find it necessary to hide the fact that, in this critical work, I will start with a firm conviction of the need to liquidate the 'fourth' period of our Party's history, having thrown Lenin's 'over-bent stick' onto the rubbish heap.

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72 See Plekhanov's 'Centralism or Bonapartism' in Chapter 21 of the present collection.

## Conclusions

Inevitably, any conclusions drawn from an examination of the documents contained in the present volume will be somewhat provisional in nature. These documents were selected because they appeared to reveal some of the more salient principled, tactical or organisational ideas of the Social-Democratic trends opposed to Lenin which existed during the first few years of the RSDLP's history. No all-sided examination of the period and its conflicts has really been attempted, and those who wish to disagree with the conclusions stated below might therefore be quick to challenge the criteria according to which the documents were selected and to ask whether these documents are representative of the period under discussion. At this stage, no defence is being offered against criticism of this type, and what is written below might consequently be regarded as an attempt to stimulate debate about the early history of the RSDLP rather than a series of firm conclusions. It should of course be emphasised that these brief conclusions are predominantly drawn from the documents contained in this collection, which are considered in the context of the introductory discussion which appears at the beginning of the volume, and that others may therefore wish to debate these conclusions using other material.

Up until now, there have been few scholars writing in English who have argued that the 'Economist' ideas of *Rabochee Delo* were significantly different from those of *Iskra* and the 'Emancipation of Labour' group who opposed them.<sup>1</sup> Both sides of the argument have been represented as Marxist, even though this type of equivalence has been challenged in Soviet and Trotskyist writing, on the grounds that *Rabochee Delo* represented some kind of 'opportunistic' deviation from Marxist orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> In relation to this controversy, the documents of the present collection can seem instructive. For example, the *Programme of Rabochee Delo*, the statement of the journal's basic doctrinal outlook, offers some support to the currently predominant view, in that the document incorporates a conception of collective struggle on the part of the industrial working class against the factory owners and the state which will culminate at some point in the overthrow of the autocracy, a

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1 For clear expositions of this widely held view, see Frankel 1963, Keep 1966, p. 84 and Lih 2006, pp. 279–334.

2 A particularly clear example of this can be found in: Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1939 pp. 80–9. However, it is fair to say that in most Soviet literature, the views of *Rabochee Delo* are rather more passed over in silence than debated.

democratic regime and, eventually, a socialist system. All of this is very evidently derived from the thinking of Marx and Engels, even if it is somewhat denuded of the more precise theoretical formulations present in the programmatic drafts of Marx, Plekhanov and Kautsky.

This said, the presence in this same *Programme* of the distinctive 'not only but also' formulation, in which the authors call for 'scientific socialism' to be supplemented by a consideration of 'the concrete relations of the social classes in Russia and the daily demands of the Russian labour movement' suggests a strangely dismissive attitude to Marxist thought. As critics such as Riazanov point out, the very determination of these 'relations of the social classes' is carried out using an intellectual method that is either Marxist or not Marxist. By failing to regard 'scientific socialism' as an example of such a method, and instead as a fixed body of conclusions, it is perhaps inevitable that *Rabochee Delo* should have provoked hostility on the part of individuals such as Plekhanov and Lenin, if only on the grounds that the views they defended were being presented as a dogma. Apart from this problem, an apparent vulgarisation, there is the suggestion that the conclusions of 'scientific socialism' are somehow alien to Russia, possibly owing to their origins in Western Europe. This insinuation seems truly remarkable given the previous efforts of Plekhanov and Lenin to apply Marxist concepts such as proletarianisation, the polarisation of modern society into two opposing classes and the accumulation and concentration of capital to the Russian countryside, efforts towards which *Rabochee Delo* seems to display a quite astonishing indifference, if not ignorance. Such a passing over in silence of 15 years of debate between Russia's Marxists and Populists really throws open the question of where *Rabochee Delo*'s principles actually lay and seems to invite accusations of light-mindedness in relation to all the key questions of the Russian revolutionary movement.

Krichevskii's contribution to *Rabochee Delo* No. 10 also reveals a somewhat disengaged attitude towards Russia's Marxist heritage, represented by the 'Emancipation of Labour' group's debates with the Populists. Whilst Lenin and Plekhanov were particularly concerned with establishing the nature of Russian social relations, especially those in the countryside, and in formulating a set programme of political goals and a political strategy clearly based on their assessment of these relations, Krichevskii defended a policy of adapting to temporary changes in public consciousness, whilst refusing to root slogans and agitational material in a stable assessment of Russia's social and historical situation. The consequences of such an approach are clear if we consider Krichevskii's earlier defence of gradualism in *Rabochee Delo* No. 7 and contrast it with the fighting rhetorical tone of 'A Historic Turn', and if we bear in mind the far greater consistency with which Plekhanov and Lenin advanced

their chosen economic and political 'demands'.<sup>3</sup> Once again, this inconsistency between the various public statements of *Rabochee Delo* serves to convict it of the 'opportunism' with which it was reproached in Soviet historical literature. In defending this inconsistency, Krichevskii reveals an entirely eccentric conception of 'Marxist principles', which are understood as an account of the nature of socialism – an account which, ironically, is notably absent from the *Programme of Rabochee Delo* – and not as a means through which sense could be made of a complex and unusual social and political structure then existing in Russia. Clarifying remarks in the *Programme* discussed above, Krichevskii appears to state that 'scientific socialism' is not a tool for social analysis but, once again, a set of fixed conclusions concerning the direction and final goal of world history, which must be connected to an always changing and seemingly intellectually impenetrable Russian conditions.

Martynov's article in *Rabochee Delo* No. 10 is highly critical of the Plekhanov-Lenin mode of thinking, but the basis on which it takes its stand seems highly ambiguous, again rendering the question of *Rabochee Delo*'s world view moot. His criticism of the *Iskra-Zaria* agrarian programme is significant, as the latter is evidently based in the Plekhanov-Lenin definition of the Russian countryside as an emerging capitalist economy. Without challenging this theoretical assessment and without posing an alternative, Martynov ridicules the basic idea behind it, that of a revision of the terms of the 1861 'emancipation', on the grounds that it was impossible to put right such an ancient injustice without creating a mass of new injustices. This attack would appear to pose a challenge to the Plekhanov-Lenin's notion that Russia's anti-autocratic revolution would be bourgeois-democratic in nature, in the sense that their agrarian programme seems to reflect the view that the social outcome of this revolution would involve a mass of independent small proprietors in the countryside, rather than rural proletarians working on nationalised or collectivised estates. However, in attacking this programme, Martynov fails to offer an alternative solution to Russia's agrarian problems, and the reader is obliged to speculate what this might be, on the basis of limited evidence. In the article itself, Martynov hints that 'Black Redistribution', the redistribution of gentry, crown and church lands among the peasantry, would be a more appropriate path for Social Democracy to take, a position which seems oblivious to Plekhanov's earlier break with this idea on the grounds that the poorer peasants would not

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3 This is particularly notable in the short-term goals articulated in the *Programme of the 'Emancipation of Labour' Group*, the *Second Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democrats* and the 1903 *Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party* (Harding and Taylor 1983, pp. 55–8 and 81–4; Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, pp. 3–9).

be able to benefit from it, owing to their lack of farming capital. However, he subsequently hints at land nationalisation as a potential solution.<sup>4</sup> Generally speaking, he argues against the need for a definite Social-Democratic agrarian programme, whilst at the same time echoing Krichevskii's tendency to adapt to fickle public moods rather than basing the Social Democrats' political goals in a careful analysis of Russian social relations. As with all *Rabochee Delo*'s previous statements, the extreme flexibility of this outlook seems to open the door to allegations of opportunism in crucial social and political questions.

Bearing these ambiguities in mind, it is actually quite hard to categorise the political views of *Rabochee Delo*. The journal was evidently influenced, though in a fairly superficial manner, by some of the conclusions of conventional Marxist thought, in so far as it associates the goals of political democracy and socialism with the class struggle of the factory proletariat, but there is next to no evidence of its ability to offer an analysis of Russian society from the point of view of competing class interests that could reasonably be termed Marxist or, on the basis of such an analysis, formulate clear and stable perspectives, goals, tactics or strategy for the Russian Social-Democratic movement. Where goals and tactical prescriptions are articulated, which is not very often, they appear to be borrowed from previous documents, such as the *Manifesto of the RSDLP* or *On Agitation*. There is a consistent failure to engage with the arguments of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and the tactical prescriptions are highly inconsistent over time. All these features seem to justify the characterisation of the group by Lenin as 'eclectic', and the possibly more abusive term 'opportunist' does not seem entirely wide of the mark either, given its lack of clarity and stability on almost every issue of importance to Russian Social Democracy. Of all its various features, the one which is probably the most salient is the support for the 'stagist' method of agitation, which appears in both its first and final programmatic drafts, as well as Krichevskii's article in the seventh issue, whilst also appearing to receive a note of praise in Martynov's article. This consistent feature perhaps partially justifies its identification by the supporters of *Iskra* as an 'Economist' publication, though in saying this it should be noted that clearly political agitation and education formed the focus of a number of articles carried by both the journal and its agitational supplement, *Listok Rabochego Dela*.

Perhaps the most puzzling and intriguing feature of the journal is its silence in relation to the earlier, and to a degree ongoing, conflict between the 'Emancipation of Labour' group and the Populists, as the motivation for this is not clear, even though a multitude of possibilities present themselves. For example, it is quite possible that, with the defeat of the 'Emancipation of

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4 Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 250.

Labour' group in the emigration, and certain suggestions during the 1890s that the Populists were turning away from the peasantry and towards the urban workers,<sup>5</sup> *Rabochee Delo* had concluded that the time was ripe for a fusion between the Social Democrats and their rivals in the socialist camp. Hints in this direction appear to be made in the *Programme of Rabochee Delo* and other incidents, such as the passing support for terrorism on the part of *Listok Rabochego Dela* and Martynov's half-hint in the direction of 'black redistribution', may be interpreted as giving support to this argument. However, an equally strong case could be made that *Rabochee Delo*'s silence regarding the 'Emancipation of Labour' group owed more to a certain desire to modernise Russian Social-Democratic thought in the light of the recent movement of the industrial proletariat, in the sense that the Social Democrats' previous concern with rural matters had become obsolete.

This is a particularly intriguing notion when viewed in combination with the idea that Social-Democratic forces active in the western extremities of the Russian empire, the Baltic region and Poland in particular, may have had particular influence over *Rabochee Delo*, in other words, areas of the empire where the conditions of the peasants were somewhat different from those discussed in Plekhanov's polemics with the Populists. Serfdom had been abolished in the Baltic region shortly after the Napoleonic wars, though in this case the peasants had not received land, but instead became tenants, share-croppers and labourers, whilst in Poland, the 'emancipation' of the 1860s took place on terms somewhat more generous than in Russia. The Jewish population of these areas did not for the most part work the land. On the basis of such social conditions, the Plekhanov-Lenin contention that Russia still had to pass through a bourgeois-democratic revolution in order to resolve its agrarian problems may have seemed less attractive, and the debate with the Populists irrelevant, in so far as the commune of smallholding peasants did not exist and the peasantry were in most cases much closer in social status to proletarians, working as hired labour on large estates. Under these influences, it is quite possible that a section of Social Democrats active in Russia concluded that local agriculture was already highly capitalist and was ripe only for transformation into state property as part of a socialist rather than a bourgeois-democratic revolution. On this basis, they may well have turned against the debate taking place between the Social Democrats and the Populists in 'Great Russia' and looked more toward German theorists such as Kautsky for guidance in theoretical matters, as *Rabochee Delo* at one point appears to do.<sup>6</sup> However, this

5 See, for example, Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 2, pp. 556–7.

6 In the 'Announcement' carried in *Rabochee Delo* 5, Chapter 3 of the present collection.

suggestion can only be considered speculative at this stage: further research would undoubtedly be necessary to establish this type of material basis for the ideas of *Rabochee Delo*.

Reviewing the documents of the proto-Menshevik trend in *Iskra*, it seems that Menshevism can trace its earliest origins to the period prior to the Second Congress of the RSDLP. During this period, *Iskra* was involved in a hard faction-fight with supporters of *Rabochee Delo*, *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and the Bund for control of the local organisations of the Party, whilst also attempting to co-operate with representatives of these forces in the work of the Organising Committee. In the letters of Martov to the London branch of the *Iskra* Editorial Board of December 1902, a certain anxiety is evident on the part of the *Iskra* emigration regarding the contest for the loyalty of local committees, which was motivated either by a pessimism regarding *Iskra*'s capacity to triumph in the struggle, or a fear that the battle would split the Party. Criticism is raised of the plan, seemingly hatched by Lenin at the time of the Belstock Conference, to hold an RSDLP Congress involving all tendencies of the Party on an approximately proportional basis, and the idea of a Congress of pro-*Iskra* committee is at one point mooted as an alternative, whose elected leadership would then negotiate with the remaining Party factions. This scepticism towards factional conflict, evidently motivated only in part by peaceableness, and in part by an evident but misguided fear of the strength of the opposition, re-emerged in the Organising Committee itself once Alexandrova was sent from Paris to join the body in early 1903. On this occasion, the polemic between the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Poslednie Izvestiia*, the news sheet of the Foreign Committee of the Bund, resulted in a new association of factional conflict with the emigration, which produced, on the one hand, a growth in sympathy by Alexandrova for the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representatives on the Organising Committee, and on the other, support for a Party leadership based in Russia, in which the central Party newspaper would be held accountable to the Central Committee.

Pavlovich's account of the Second RSDLP Congress seems to corroborate the account given by Lenin<sup>7</sup> that this same Alexandrova played a key role in a rebellion against the discipline of the *Iskra* faction at this meeting, along with the representatives of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* on the Organising Committee. He states that her aim was to secure the invitation of Riazanov to the Congress, Riazanov being an ideological rival to the *Iskra* Editorial Board whose 'Struggle' group had a reputation for supporting factional reconciliation, an individual whose presence would probably have weakened the ideological dominance of the *Iskra* leadership over the meeting. Though this attempt failed, all the

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7 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 7, pp. 19–34.



circumstantial evidence suggests that Alexandrova's concerns regarding the negative influence of the *Iskra* Editorial Board somehow convinced Martov to attempt modifications to the organisation of the leading RSDLP institutions proposed in Lenin's draft constitution for the Party, the result being a wrangle at Congress over the relative powers of the *Iskra* Editorial Board and the RSDLP Central Committee. In his pamphlet, Pavlovich also hints that Martov, in yielding to the influence of Alexandrova, was swayed by the urgent wish of *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* and other anti-*Iskra* groups to retain an independent newspaper in the post-Congress period. Such influence seems to be reflected in Martov's modification to the famous paragraph one of the rules, which Pavlovich presents as relating as much to 'whole organisations' as to individual members, in the sense that it allowed organisations made up of Party members to exist independently of the official RSDLP apparatus but within the Party, and to thus avoid the requirements of Party discipline. According to Pavlovich's account, one further concession Martov offered this group was a 'broad' Central Committee slate including at least one *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representative, whilst Martov's relaxed attitude to co-option could be read as promising further additions to the central Party bodies drawn from the ranks of the anti-*Iskra* groups.

On the basis of the evidence just cited, it seems safe to conclude that a series of organisational differences led to the emergence of a political struggle between Martov and Lenin at the Second Congress of the RSDLP itself. This said, there was a distinct lack of consistency in the manner in which the group around Martov advanced their organisational arguments in the period following this Congress. So long as they remained without positions in the *Iskra* Editorial Board, the Alexandrova-influenced criticism concerning the dominance of the *Iskra* Editorial Board over the RSDLP Central Committee appears to have been exploited, hence its prominent position in the resolution of the September Conference. Conversely, Martov's protesting account of the Second Congress of the League Abroad in the *State of Siege* seems to admit that the real executive power in the RSDLP lay with the allegedly subordinate Central Committee, a representative of which declared the Congress dissolved when it appeared to have acted against the RSDLP constitution. Fortunately for Martov, any negative attention this incongruity might have otherwise drawn to itself appears to have been deflected by the division which emerged between Lenin and Plekhanov at this same League Congress, a development which resulted in the resignation of Lenin from the *Iskra* Editorial Board and gave Plekhanov the opportunity to raise a slogan which the Martov group had by this stage almost forgotten: opposition to factionalism, a fault with which Lenin was reproached in an entirely hypocritical manner. Thus it seems that Martov and

Trotsky managed to escape being held accountable for some rather weak arguments concerning the nature of the RSDLP's leading bodies, just as objections to the sheer inconsistency of Martov, who first of all denounced the 'dictatorship of the Editorial Board over the Party', only to then accept a post in this same Editorial Board, scarcely seem to have been heard. However, this 'success' should not distract from the fact that the group around Martov appeared to demonstrate the habit of adopting, and then abandoning, arguments on the basis of convenience rather than on the basis of consistent political principle.

The question might therefore be raised as to whether the Martov group possessed any significant political substance, a special organisational point of view which justified the battle with a duly elected RSDLP leadership, and which justified its seemingly serial disregard for the organisational decisions of the Party's Second Congress. The evidence of the documents in the present collection does not support this point of view; on the contrary it supports Lenin's contention that the Martov group's campaign was driven primarily by a desire for extra positions in the Party's leading bodies. Any notion that the Martov group represented a reaction to Lenin's supposedly authoritarian policies cannot really be sustained, especially if some of Martov's contributions to the debates at the Second RSDLP Congress are taken into account, contributions which openly celebrate authoritarian leadership in the Party in a manner that is hard to find in Lenin's remarks at the meeting.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, the Martov group can hardly be presented as an advocate of Party democracy given its evident disregard for decisions taken by majority vote at the Party Congress and the repeated expressions of distrust towards the idea that supposedly ignorant representatives of the Party rank-and-file should interfere in the affairs of the Party leadership, concerning which they were assumed to know nothing. Plekhanov's article presenting Lenin's campaign for a new Party Congress as 'Bonapartism' scarcely reassures in this respect, even if it does make some valid, if minor, criticisms of Lenin's Party constitution, criticisms which were in the event acted on by the Third Congress of the RSDLP.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, the overwhelming impression of a rather disdainful elitism in early Menshevik thinking strengthens Lenin's argument that the group was in effect a group of intellectuals who were uncomfortable with democratic decisions taken by the

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8 See, for example, Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party 1978, p. 356 (a defence of the powers of the Central Committee to dissolve local committees against criticism from Bund and *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* representatives); pp. 368–9 (support for dissolution of the Union Abroad) and pp. 405–6 (his resolution calling for the dissolution of the publications 'Struggle' and *Zhizn'*).

9 Lenin 1960–79, Vol. 8, pp. 444–6.

rank-and-file of a Social-Democratic Party and who expected deference from this rank-and-file, rather than to be answerable to it. Rather than representing democratic socialism in the face of dictatorial ambitions on the part of Lenin, it seems that the Martov group rebelled against some of the more democratic aspects of the latter's organisational thinking.

Concrete examples of this include the attempt to limit freedom of expression inside the Party on the part of Alexandrova and the *Iuzhnyi Rabochii* group when they held a position of power in the Organising Committee. This was directed against the ultimately quite significant debate which was taking place between the Bund and *Iskra* over race relations in the Social Democracy, and it could be said to be reflected in the attempt of the Organising Committee majority to silence Pavlovich in the debate on whether to invite Riazanov to the Second RSDLP Congress. At the Congress itself, there was of course the notable objection by the Martov group to the idea of electing the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and the persistent demand that the vote of the majority to elect just three new editors be set aside so that their own preference could be implemented in the period following the Congress. Having obtained this concession, they then abandoned their idea of a Third RSDLP Congress to resolve any differences which had emerged, thus once again appearing to reveal a mistrustful attitude towards the Party rank-and-file, with the result that the next Congress of delegates from all the local RSDLP branches was organised exclusively by the followers of Lenin, efforts which were boycotted by pro-Martov local committees, who also refused to attend the Congress, despite its legitimacy in terms of the Party constitution.

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